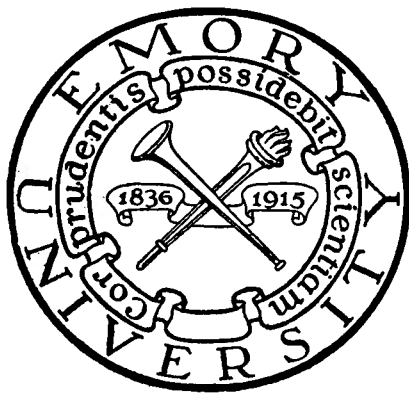


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D E S M O N D.

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C H A R L O T T E S M I T H.

VOLUME II.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR G. G. J. AND J. ROBINSON,
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D E S M O N D.

L E T T E R I.

TO MISS WAVERLY AT BATH.

Upper Seymour Street, Nov. 10, 1790.

WHY did I flatter myself, dearest Fanny, that the numberless distresses which have lately furrounded me, would either bring with them that calm resignation which should teach me to bear, or that total debility of mind that should make me forget to feel all their poignancy.—Is it, that I sat out in life with too great a share of sensibility? or is my lot to be particularly wretched?—Every means I take to save myself from pain—to save those I love—on whom, indeed, my happiness depends, serves only to render me more

VOL. II. B miserabile.

miserable.—How ill I have succeeded in regard to my brother, the enclosed letter will too well explain !

Why did I ever involve Desmond in the hopeless task of checking his conduct. —I am so distressed, so hurt, that it is with the utmost difficulty I write.—However, as the generous exertions of this excellent young man have, for the present, rescued my brother from the actual commission of the folly he meditated, though perhaps at the expence of a most valuable life, you will communicate to my mother this very unfortunate affair, and desire her directions in regard to recalling her son.

Perhaps I ought to say all this to her myself; but I am really so shaken by this intelligence, that it is not without great difficulty I can write to you.—My fortitude, which you have of late been accustomed to compliment, has, I know not why, quite forsaken me now: and, methinks, I could bear any thing better, than
that

that such a man as Desmond should be so great a sufferer from his generous attention to a part of my family.

I have been very ill ever since the receipt of this melancholy letter; and, it is only to-day, though I received it on Thursday, that I have had strength enough to forward it to you.—I am now so near being confined, that the people who are collected about me, weary me with their troublesome care, and will not let me have a moment to myself.

It would have been a comfort to me, my Fanny, to have had your company at this time; but I know that this incident will add to the reluctance with which my mother would have before borne your absence from her; and, therefore, I will not again name it, nor suffer myself to make those complaints, in which *we* (I mean the unhappy) too frequently *indulge* ourselves, without considering that this querulous weakness is painful to others; and,

to ourselves, unavailing :—for, alas ! it cures not the evils it describes.

As to Mr. Verney, he has never been at home since the October meeting, nor have I ever heard from him.—His friend, Colonel Scarfdale, called at my door on Tuesday, and was, by accident, admitted.—He made a long visit, and talked, as usual, in a style which I suppose I might admire (since all the world allows him to be *very charming*) if I could but understand what he means. However, though I am so tasteless as not to discover the perfections of this wonderful being, I endured his conversation from three o'clock till half past five ; in hopes, that as he is so much connected with Mr. Verney, I might learn from him where my husband is.—But he laughed off all my enquiries unfeelingly enough ; and, all I could collect was, that Mr. Verney is now, or at least was a few days since, at the house of one of their mutual friends in Yorkshire.—I anticipate the remark you will make upon this—You who
are

are so little inclined to spare his follies, or, indeed, those of any of your acquaintance; and, it is too true, that when he is at home, it makes no other difference to me than that of destroying my peace without promoting my happiness.—I check my pen, however—and when I look at my two lovely children, I blame myself for being thus betrayed into complaints against their father.—Alas! why are our pleasures, our tastes, our views of life so different?—But I will stifle these murmurs; and, indeed, I would most willingly drop this hopeless subject for ever. Let me return to one that gives, at least, more favourable ideas of human nature, though it can only be productive of pain to me—I mean—to poor Desmond.—Oh! Fanny, what a heart is his!—How noble is that disdain of personal danger, when mingled with such manly tenderness—such generous sensibility for the feelings of others!—When we saw so much of him in Kent the first year of my marriage, we used, I

remember, to have little disputes about him—but they were childish. Do you not recollect that when I contended for Lavater's system, I introduced him in support of my argument?—His was the most open, ingenuous countenance I had ever seen; and his manners, as well as all I could then know of his heart and his temper, were exactly such as that countenance indicated. You then, in the mere spirit of contradiction, used to say, that this ingenuous expression was often lost in clouds for whole hours together; and that you believed this paragon was a sulky sort of an animal.—Did you ever believe that such a striking instance of disinterested kindness towards your own family would so confirm my opinion?—Yet while I write he suffers—perhaps dies! the victim of that generous and exalted spirit which led him to hazard his life, that he might fulfil a promise I, who have so little right to his friendship, drew from him—A promise
mise

mife that he would be attentive to the conduct of my brother!

Indeed, Fanny, when my imagination fets him before me wounded, in pain, perhaps in danger (and it is an image I have hardly loft for a moment fince the receipt of this cruel intelligence) I am fo very miserable, that all other anxieties of my life, multiplied as they have lately been, are unheeded and unfelt.—But why fhould I write thus—why hazard communicating to you, my dear fifter, a portion of that pain from which I cannot myfelf efcape?

I will bid you good night, my Fanny. It is now fix-and-thirty hours fince I have clofed my eyes—I will try to fleep, and to forget how very very long it will be before I can hear again from Marfeilles.

Write to me I conjure you—tell me what are my mother's intentions as to fending for my brother home. And be affured of the tender affection of your

GERALDINE VERNEY.

P. S. Did you ever hear of this Madame de Boisselle? and do you know whether she is a widow or married?—Young, middle aged or old?—She is sister to Mr. Desmond's favourite French friend, Montfleuri; and, if she has any heart, must have exquisite pleasure in softening, to such a man as Desmond, the long hours of pain and confinement.—I suppose he has forgotten that I read French tolerably; however, perhaps, it was better to let the surgeon write.—How miserable is the suspense I must endure till the arrival of the next letters.

L E T T E R II.*

TO MRS. VERNEY.

Marfeilles, 17th Oct. 1799.

M A D A M,

IT is at the request of Mr. Desmond, that I take the liberty of addressing you. His anxiety, on your account, has never forsaken him in the midst of what have been certainly very acute sufferings; not unattended with danger.

It may be necessary to enter into a detail of the causes that prevent his writing himself, on a subject, which nothing but the impracticability of his doing, would, I am sure, induce him to entrust to a stranger.

It is now four days since I received a summons to attend, at the distance of three miles from the city, an English gentle-

* Enclosed in the foregoing to Miss Waverly.

man, who had, on that morning, been engaged in an affair of honor. I had not till then the honor of knowing Mr. Desmond—whom I found very terribly wounded by a pistol shot in the right arm.—The ball entering a little below the elbow, had not only broken, but so shattered the bone, that I am afraid the greatest skill cannot answer the consequences.—Besides this, there was a bullet, from the first brace of pistols which were fired, lodged in the right shoulder, which, though it was so situated as to be extracted without much difficulty, greatly encreases the inflammation, and of course, the hazard of the other wound, where the sinews are so torn, and the bone in such a state, that the ball could not be taken out without great pain. I did all that could be done, and Mr. Desmond bore the operation with the calmest fortitude. I left him at noon, in what I thought as favourable a way, as was possible, under such circumstances; yet I found, on my return in the evening,
that

that he had a great deal of fever; and I am concerned to say, this symptom has ever since been encreasing.—Though much is certainly to be hoped for, from the youth, constitution, and patience of the sufferer—I can by no means say I am certain of a fortunate event.

The dispute, in consequence of which this disagreeable accident happened, originated, I find, about your brother, Mr. Waverly; who, entangled by the artifices of a family well known in this country, had engaged to marry one of the young ladies—a step which was thought, by Mr. Desmond, as indeed it was universally, very indiscreet.—The interference of Mr. Desmond to prevent it, brought upon him the resentment of the lady's brother, the young Chevalier de St. Eloy; and the duel ensued.

I found, very early in the course of my attendance, that the mind of my patient was as much affected as his body; and that the greatest pain he felt, was from
being

being rendered incapable of writing to you, madam.—He at length asked if I would be so good as to write what he would dictate, as it was the only way by which he could communicate his situation to you. His advice is, that the relations of Mr. Waverly recall him immediately to England. He is now at Avignon, but notwithstanding what has happened, Mr. Desmond seems to think him by no means secure from the artifices of a family that has gained such an ascendancy over him.—I made notes with my pencil, as I sat by his bedside, and indeed promised to adhere to the words he dictated; but I think it my duty, madam, in this case, to tell you my real sentiments, and not to palliate or disguise my apprehensions.—As soon as the affair happened, I sent, by Mr. Desmond's desire, an account of it to his friend, whose house, in the Lyonsois, he had, I found, recently left; and to-day this friend, Monsieur de Montfleuri, arrived here express, with his sister, Madame de Boisbelle.—

They

They both seem extremely interested for the health of my patient, and have attended him, ever since their arrival, with unceasing assiduity.—He appears pleased and relieved by their presence; and indeed I imagined that he would rather have employed one of them to have the honor of writing to you; but he said Monsieur de Montfleuri could write but little English, and his sister none.

I believe, madam, that to receive the honor of your commands, would be particularly gratifying to my patient, of whom I most sincerely wish that I may be enabled, in a few days, to send you a better account.

I am, madam,

Your most obedient,

and most humble servant,

WILLIAM CARMICHAEL;

L E T.

L E T T E R III.

T O M R. D E S M O N D.

Bath, Nov. 15, 1790.

I NEVER was so distressed in my life, my dear Desmond, as I was at the account of your accident; which I received yesterday from Miss Waverly.—I came hither about ten days ago by the advice of my friend Banks, who thinks the waters will decide, whether the something I have about me is gout or no; and thought of nothing less than of receiving intelligence here, that you lie dangerously wounded at or near Marseilles, in a quarrel about Waverly.—This is no time to preach to you.—But I beg, that immediately upon the receipt of this letter, you will let me know if I can be of any use to you; and, if I can, be assured that nothing shall prevent my coming to you instantly. I hope you know, that I am not one of those who can,
with

with great compofure, talk over and lament their friends misfortunes, without ftirring a finger to help them.—My life, which has long afforded me no enjoyment worth the trouble of living for, is only of value to me, as it may be useful to my children, and the very few friends I love.—You once, I remember, on an occafion of much lefs importance, fcrupled to fend for me becaufe you faid you knew it was in the midft of harveft :—it is now in the midft of the wheat feafon ; yet, you fee, I am at Bath ; and, if a trifling, half-formed complaint, which is not ferious enough to have a name, could bring me thus far from home, furely the fervice of my friend Defmond would carry me much—much farther.

I fhall be extremely uneasy till I hear from you, and would, indeed, fet out directly, if I could imagine you are as ill as Mifs Waverly represents you.—But befides that, her account is inconfiftent and incoherent. I know all miffes love a duel, and to lament over the dear gallant creature who
fuffers

suffers in it.—This little wild girl seems half frantic, and does nothing but talk to every body about you, in which she shews more gratitude than discretion.—Your uncle, Danby, who is here on his usual autumnal visit, has heard of your fame; and came bustling up to me in the coffee-house this morning, to tell me, that all he had foreseen as the consequence of your imprudent journey to France, was come to pass; that you were assassinated by a party whom your politics had offended; and would probably lose your life in consequence of your foolish rage for a foolish revolution.—I endeavoured, in vain, to convince him that the affair happened in a mere private quarrel—a quarrel with an *avanturier*, in which you had engaged to save a particular friend from an improper marriage.—The old Major would not hear me.—He at length granted, that instead of being assassinated, you *might* have fought, but that still it must have been about politics; and, to do him justice, he
judges,

judges of others by himself, which is the only way a man can judge.—Very certain it is, nay, he openly professes it, that he never loved any body well enough in his life, to give himself, on their account, one quarter of an hour's pain.—The public interests him as little—he declares, that he is perfectly at ease, and therefore, cares not who is otherwise; and as to all revolutions, or even alterations, he has a mortal aversion to them.—Miss Waverly tells me she has written to you, by desire of her mother, to thank you for your very friendly interposition, and has given you an account of all your connexions in England.—This I am very sorry for, because I am afraid she can give you no account of the Verney family that will not add to the present depression of your spirits; indeed she cannot, with truth, speak of their situation favourably; and, if truth could say any thing good of Verney, Miss Waverly seems little disposed to repeat it.—She is naturally satirical, and hates Verney, to whom

whom she thinks her sister has been sacrificed; so, that whenever they meet, it is with displeasure on her side, and with contemptuous indifference on his:—but Fanny, whenever she has an opportunity of speaking of him, takes care that the dark shades of his character shall have all their force.—Allow, my dear Desmond, something for this in the account you may, perhaps, hear.—Let me have early intelligence of you I conjure you; and I again beg you to remember, that you may command the presence, as in any other way, the best services of

Your's most faithfully,

E. BETHEL.

L E T.

L E T T E R IV.

TO MR. BETHEL.

Marfeilles, 29th. Nov. 1790.

I USE another hand, my dear friend, to thank you for your letter of the fourteenth, which reached me yesterday.—Your attentive kindness in offering to come to me, I shall never forget: though I do not avail myself of it, because I know such a journey can be neither convenient or agreeable to you; and because it is in your power, and in yours only, to act for me in England, in an affair on which the tranquillity of my mind depends. Tranquillity—without which, the progress of my cure will be slow; and that single reason will, I am persuaded, be enough to reconcile you in the task I now solicit you to engage in.

A letter from Miss Waverly, which I received by the same post that brought
yours,

yours, has rendered me more than ever wretched. Good heavens! in what a situation is the woman, so justly adored by your unhappy friend, at a moment when he cannot fly to her assistance!—She had lain in only ten days, when her sister wrote to me.—There are two executions in the house, one for sixteen hundred, the other for two thousand three hundred pounds. Verney is gone, nobody knows whither.—And Geraldine, in such a situation, has no father, brother, or friend to support her.—Yet the natural dignity of her mind has, it should seem, never forsaken her.

A little before her confinement she wrote to thank me for my friendship for her brother, and to deplore its consequences—(Oh, Bethel! for how much more suffering would not her tender gratitude overpay me) but of herself, of her own uneasiness, she said nothing; nor should I have known it but for Fanny Waverly; whom her mother has, at length, sent to the suffering angel, and who has given
me

me a dreadful detail of the supposed situation of Verney's affairs—I say supposed, because there is nothing certainly known from himself; and these debts were only discovered by the entrance of the sheriff's officers. I cannot rest, my dear Bethel, whilst Geraldine is thus distressed. My thoughts are constantly employed upon the means of relieving her; but a cripple as I am, and so far from England, I must depend on you to assist me.—Since then you were so good as to offer to come hither, I hope and believe you will not hesitate to take a shorter journey, much more conducive to my repose, even than the satisfaction of seeing you.—Go, I beseech you, to London—enquire into the nature of these debts; and, at all events, discharge them; but concealing carefully at whole entreaty you take this trouble; even concealing yourself, if it be possible—I send you an order, on my banker, for five thousand pounds, and if twice the sum be wanted to restore to Geraldine her house,

and a little, even tranſient repoſe, I ſhould think it a cheap purchaſe.

Do not argue with me, dear Bethel, about this—but hear me, when I moſt ſolemnly aſſure you, that far from meaning to avail myſelf of any advantage which grateful ſenſibility might give me over ſuch a mind as hers, it is not my intention ſhe ſhall ever know of the tranſaction; and I entreat you to manage it for me accordingly. While I find her riſe every moment in *my eſteem*, *I know* that I am becoming—alas! am already become unworthy hers.—Do not aſk me an explanation; I have ſaid more than I intended—but let it go.—The greateſt favor you can do me, Bethel, is to execute this commiſſion for me as expeditiouſly as poſſible, and it will give you pleaſure to hear, that I am ſo much better than my ſurgeon expected, from the early appearances of my wound, that it is probable I ſhall be able to thank you with my own hand, for the friendly commiſſion I now entreat you to undertake.

take. I am already able to move my fingers, though not to guide a pen. My arm however, is yet in such a state, as renders it very imprudent, if not impossible for me, to leave the skilful man, who has, contrary to all probability and expectation, saved it from amputation; which, at first, seemed almost unavoidable. Montfleuri wishes that I may remove to his house, in the Lyonois, as a sort of first stage towards England; but I have been already too much obliged to him, and his sister, Madame de Boisbelle. He attended me himself day and night, while there was so much danger, as Mr Carmichael apprehended, for many days after the accident; and since he has been absent, his sister, has with too much goodness given me her constant attention.—Montfleuri has been to Paris, and returned only yesterday. He sees my uneasiness since the receipt of Miss Waverly's letter—Madame de Boisbelle too sees it, and what is worse, my medical friends perceive it, from the state of

my wound; so that as it is impossible for me, my dear friend, either to conceal or conquer it, my sole dependence for either peace of mind, or bodily health, is on your friendly endeavours to remove it.

How long, how very long, will the hours seem that must intervene before I can hear that this is done; and what shall I do to beguile them? Montfleuri talks to me of politics, and exults in the hope that all will be settled advantageously for his country, and without bloodshed; I rejoice, most sincerely rejoice, in this prospect, so favourable to the best interests of humanity; but I can no longer enter with eagerness into the detail of those measures by which it is to be realized.—One predominant sensation, excludes for the present, all the lively interest I felt in more general concerns, and while Mrs. Verney is ——— but it is not necessary, surely to add more on this topic—No, my dear Bethel, you will, on such an occasion, enter into my feelings from the generosity
of

of your own heart, and what ever that little touch of misanthropy, which you have acquired, may lead you to think of human nature in general—you will after my asseverations on this subject, and I hope, after what you know of me, do justice as well to the disinterested nature of my love, as to the sincerity of that friendship, with which,

I ever remain,

most affectionately yours,

LIONEL DESMOND.

L E T T E R V.

T O M R. D E S M O N D.

London, Dec. 17, 1790.

THE moment I received your letter I hastened from Bath, where I then was, to London; determined to execute your commission to the best of my power, though I neither approved it, or knew very well how to set about it.—Do not imagine, however, my dear Desmond, that I have a mind so narrowed by a long converse with the world, or an heart so hardened by too much knowledge of its inhabitants, as to blame the liberality of your sentiments, or be insensible to the pleasure of indulging them.—But here there is a fatal and inseparable bar to the success of every attempt you can make to befriend Mrs. Verney and her children; and the facility with which Verney finds himself delivered from one difficulty, only serves to encourage

courage him to plunge into others, till total and irretrievable ruin shall overtake him.

I was aware of all the difficulties of the task you set me; for it was by no means proper that the smallest suspicion should arise as to the quarter from whence the money came that paid off those demands, which must otherwise have brought all the effects Verney had at his town-house to sale within a very short time.—I have a friend in the law who, to great acuteness, adds that most rare quality, in an attorney, of strict integrity.—To him I confided the business, and he has managed it so well, that Mrs. Verney is again in uninterrupted possession of her house; and believes, as does Verney himself, that Mrs. Waverly advanced the money, but keeps it concealed lest it should subject her to future demands. Of the means by which all this was done, I need not enter into a detail—You will be satisfied to know it is done, and that the pride and delicacy of

Geraldine have not suffered.—You will be better pleased, perhaps, to hear something of herself.—I thought I might call there as an acquaintance; and though I received intelligence at the door, that Mrs. Verney was not well, and saw no company but her own family, I sent up my name, and was immediately admitted.

I found her in her dressing-room, so pale, so languid, so changed from the lovely blooming Geraldine of four years since, that I beheld her with extreme concern.—Yet however unwilling I am, my friend, to encourage in you the growth of a passion productive on all sides of misery, I am compelled to own, that this charming woman, in the pride of early beauty, never appeared to me so interesting, so truly lovely, as at the moment I saw her.—In her lap lay sleeping the little infant of a month old—The boy of which I have heard you speak with so much fondness, sat on the carpet at her feet, and the girl on the sofa by her.—In answer to my compliments,

compliments, she said with a sweet, yet melancholy smile—"This is very good indeed, Mr. Bethel, and like an old friend.—How are your two sweet children—are they in town with you?—It would give me great pleasure to see them."—I answered her enquiries about Harry and Louisa in the usual way; and she then, with a sort of anxiety in her manner, for which I could easily account, talked for a moment on the common topics of the day; which almost unavoidably led me to speak of France.—She sighed when I first named it; and, with a faint blush, exclaimed—"Ah! Mr. Bethel! how can I think of France without feeling the acutest pain, when it instantly brings to my mind what has so lately happened there to our excellent friend, Mr. Desmond?"—A deeper colour wavered for a moment on her cheek; her voice trembled; but she seemed, by an effort, to repress her emotion, and continued.—"Were you not a most candid and generous minded man, Mr. Be-

thel, I should fear that you would almost hold me in aversion, for having been, however unintentionally, the cause of your friend's very dreadful accident: believe me, nothing in my whole life, (and it has not certainly been a fortunate life,) has ever given me so much concern as this event. All who love Mr. Desmond (and there are few young men so universally and deservedly beloved) must detest the very name of those who were the means of hazarding a life so valuable, and of exposing him to suffer such pain and confinement; perhaps such lasting inconvenience—for I fear"—and her voice faltered so as to become almost inarticulate—"I fear it is far from being certain that he will ever be restored to the use of his hand."

That idea seemed so distressing to her, that she looked as if she was ready to faint.—I hastened, you may be assured, to relieve her apprehensions; and assured her, that not only your hand would be well,
but

but that you thought yourself infinitely overpaid for the inconvenience you had sustained in your rencounter with the Chevalier de St. Eloy, since you had been the means of saving her brother from a marriage so extremely improper: then, to detach her thoughts from what I saw they most painfully dwelt upon, your hazard and sufferings, I gave her an account I had learned from Mr. Carmichael * of the family of St. Eloy; and, as I found this still affected her too much, because it excited her gratitude anew, towards you, by whose interference Waverly had escaped from a connexion with it, I made a transition to the affairs of France: and knowing how well she could talk on every subject, had a wish to draw her out on this.

The little I could obtain from her would have convinced me, had I needed such conviction, of the strength of her under-

* In a letter that does not appear.

standing, and that rectitude of heart, which is so admirable and so rare.—Yet, with all this, there is no presumption; none of that anxiety to be heard, or that dictatorial tone of conversation that has so often disgusted and repulsed me, in women who either have, or affect to have, a superiority of understanding.—Geraldine affects nothing: and, far from appearing solicitous to be considered as an oracle, she said, with an enchanting smile, towards the close of our conversation—“ I know not how I have ventured, Mr. Bethel, to speak so much on a subject, which I am very willing to acknowledge, I have had no opportunity of knowing well.—Mr. Verney, you know, is no politician, or if he were, he would hardly deign to converse on that topic with a woman—for of the understandings of all women he has the most contemptible opinion; and says, ‘ that we are good for nothing but to make a shew while we are young, and to become nurses when we are old.’—I know that more than
half

half the men in the world are of his opinion; and that by them, what some celebrated author has said, is generally allowed to be true—that a woman even of talents is only considered by man with that sort of pleasure with which they contemplate a bird who speaks a few words plainly—I believe it is not exactly the expression, but, however, it is the sense of it; and, I am afraid, is the general sense of the world.”

I could not forbear interrupting here, to assure her, that if such an opinion was general, mine was an exception; for that I was convinced, ignorance and vanity were much more fatal to that happiness which every man seeks, or ought to seek, when he marries, than that knowledge which has been insidiously called unbecoming in women.—I was going on, for I found myself absolutely unable to quit her, when her husband and the Lord Newminster, whom you described to me at

Margate some months since, entered the room together.

Verney, who has naturally a wild, unfetled look, really shocked me.—To an emaciated figure and unhealthy countenance, were added the disgusting appearance of a debauch of liquor not slept off; and cloaths not since changed.—The other man was in even a worse state; but as he was not married to Geraldine, I looked at him only with pity and disgust; while, towards Verney, I felt something like horror and detestation.

Geraldine turned pale when he was announced; and said, in a low voice, as he came into the room—"This is very unexpected, I have seen Mr. Verney only once for these last five weeks"—I would have retired, but she added, with an half-fled sigh—"Oh! no! do not go, you hear he has his friend Newminster with him, and probably will not stay five minutes.—But if he should," added she, as if fearing she had spoken too much in a
tone

tone of regret and complaint—"if he should, he will, I am sure, be happy to see his old friend Mr. Bethel."

At this instant Lord Newminster, followed by Verney, entered.—The former appeared stupid from the effects of his last night, or rather morning's carousal; but Verney, who had just heard that the creditors, who had the executions in his house, were paid, and the bailiffs withdrawn, was not in a humour to be reserved, or even considerate.—Without speaking to his wife, he shook hands with me, and cried—"Damme, Bethel, how long is it since I saw you last? I thought you were gone to kingdom come.—Here's Newminster and I, we came only last night from his house in Norfolk.—Damme, we came to raise the wind together; for I have had the Philistines in my house, and be cursed to them, who had laid violent hands on all my goods and chattels, except my wife and her brats; but some worthy soul, I know not who, has sent them

off.—I wish I could find out who is so damned generous, I'd try to touch them a little for the ready I want now."

Oh! could you have seen the countenance of Geraldine, while this speech was uttering!—she was paler than ever; and was, I saw, quite unable to continue in the room—she therefore rose, and saying her little boy was awake, who had continued to sleep in her lap during our conversation, she walked apparently with very feeble steps out of the room; the two other children following her—"away with ye all," cried the worthless brute their father, "there, get ye along to the nursery, that's the proper place for women and children."—The look that Geraldine gave him, as she passed to the door, which I held open for her, is not to be described—it was contempt, stifled by concern—it was indignation subdued by shame and sorrow.—"Good morning to you, Mr. Bethel," said she, as she went by me—"I know not how to thank you enough for this friendly

friendly visit, or can I say how much my obligation will be increased, if you will have the goodness to repeat it; pray let me see you again before you leave London.”—I assured her I would wait on her with pleasure; and I felt extremely unhappy as the door closed after her, and I saw her no more.—

“Well, now Bethel,” said the husband, “let me talk to you a little; tell me—are not your horses at Hall’s, at Hyde Park Corner?” I answered, “yes;”—“aye? then you’re the man I want;—you’ve got a hellish clever trotting mare, one of the nicest things I’ve seen a long time;—have you a mind to sell her?”

“Certainly no.”

“I am for sorry it, for I want just such a thing. Don’t you remember a famous trotting galloway I had, two years ago, that I bought at Tatterfal’s, that would go fifteen miles within the hour—I’ve lost him by a cursed accident, and I want one as speedy—damme, Bethel, I’ll give you a
hundred

hundred for your little mare, and I'll be curs'd if that is not fifty more than she's worth."

"I shall not sell the mare, Mr. Verney," answered I, very coldly, so let us talk of something else.—Pray tell me, what is this story which you touched upon, a little unfeelingly I thought, before your wife, of an execution in your house."

"An execution—by heaven I'd two, and that old twaddler, mother Waverly, for the first time in her life, has done a civil thing, for she paid them off the other day.—If my wife had not lain-in though I suppose, and been so much alarmed as they told me she was, so that the good old gossip, was afraid of the consequences, I believe she'd have seen me at the devil before she'd have drawn her purse-strings; so 'twas well timed, and now I only wish she'd keep the child, for I'd encumbrances enough of small children before."

"Good God," Sir, said I, "is it possible that having married such a woman as
Mrs.

Mrs. Verney, and having such lovely and promising children, you can neglect the one, and call the other encumbrances."

"Poh", replied he carelessly, "I don't neglect her—but children—when one has a house full of them, as I think I am likely to have, pull confounded hard; and as to their promising, I know nothing that they promise, but to grow up, to pull harder still, and find out that I am in their way before I have any mind to relinquish the enjoyments of this life."

"Why then, since you must have been aware of all these contingencies, did you marry?"

"Why what a senseless question! because I was a green-horn, drawn in by a pretty face, and a fine figure. The old woman, her mother, had the art of Jezebel, and I was a raw boy from College, and fancied it very knowing to marry a girl that all the young fellows of my acquaintance reckoned so confounded handsome; besides,

fides, a man must marry at some time or other."

"That," said the Peer, who seemed suddenly awaked from his stupor, by a position so contrary to his sentiments—"that I deny—'tis a damned folly, and nobody in his senses will commit it." He then talked in a manner too gross, and too offensive, for me to repeat upon paper; and concluded with expressing his pity for poor Verney; and protesting, that for his own part, though he saw half the fashionable girls in town angling for him, he should keep his neck out of such a damned yoke.

I repressed the contempt and indignation which it was impossible to help feeling; and addressing the illustrious orator—"It is unfortunate, my Lord, *sans I*, that these are your sentiments, since by them, the world is likely to be deprived of the worth you might transmit for its general benefit, and your country, in particular, of talents, which might adorn it's legislature.—Your Lordship's cotemporaries must,

must, I am sure, reflect with concern on the little prospect there thus remains, that your virtues and abilities will not descend to dignify the future annals of the British senate."

"Oh! the devil may take the British senate for me," answered he, "I never put my head into it, but when I am sent for on some points that there are doubts about; and then, indeed, I go, if ministry desire it: but otherwise, I don't care a curse for their damned politics.—As long as I keep the reversion of the sinecures my father got for me, and two or three little snug additions I've had given me since for the borough interest I'm able to carry them; not one single guinea do I care for their parties or their projects."—Then suddenly dismissing the subject, this *hereditary patriot* turned to his friend Verney, and said—"Well, but Dicky boy, what's the hour—as you've paid your humble duty to Madam, should we not be off?—I've ordered my horses to be at my own door

door at six, and I have promised Caverfield to be with him by half past seven to dinner—We must not balk him, as he has made the party on purpose for us.” “I am ready, replied Verney, for I shall not dress at home.” He then arose, as if he was going, but Miss Waverly, who had been out the former part of the morning, now entered, and while I spoke to her, Mr. Verney called to his servant to give him some directions about his cloaths, and Lord Newminster stretched himself on the sofa and went very composedly to sleep.

To any young woman, however slight may be her pretensions, the marked neglect of a man of Lord Newminster's age is usually sufficiently mortifying: but to Fanny Waverly, who has been accustomed to excessive flattery and adulation ever since she left the nursery, this rude inattention must have appeared insupportably insulting, and I forgave the little asperity there was in her manner, when she said to me with a smile of indignant contempt, and pointing.

pointing to Newminster, who was, I really believe, in a sound sleep—"An admirable specimen of the manners of a modern man of fashion."

Verney,* who had been giving directions to his servant at the door of the room, now returned to it—"Aha! little Fanny," said he, "are you there?—How dost do, child?—Hohoop, hohoop, Newminster, it is time to go, my lad—come, let us be off."

"Have you seen your wife, Sir?" said Miss Waverly very gravely—"Yes, my dear Miss Frances," replied he in a drawling tone of mimicry, "*I have* seen my wife, looking for all the world like Charity and her three children over the door of an hospital.—"

"She should not only *look* Charity," retorted Fanny smartly, "but *feel* it, or she would never be able to endure your monstrous behaviour."

"Pretty pettish little dear," cried he, "how this indignation animates your features—Anger, Miss Fanny, renders you absolutely

absolutely *piquant*—My wife now—my grave, solemn, sage spouse, is not half so *agaçant* with her charity and *all* her virtues.”

“ That she possesses *all* virtues, Sir, must be *her* merit solely, for never woman had so poor encouragement to cherish *any*—When one considers that she *suffers* you, her *charity* cannot be doubted : her *faith*, in relying upon you, is also exemplary ; and one laments that so connected, she can have nothing to do with *Hope*—”

Fanny Waverly then left the room, and as I was going before she came in, I now bowed slightly to the two friends and went out at the same time.—When we came into the next room she stopped, and would have spoke, but her heart was full—she sat down, took out her handkerchief, and burst into tears.

“ I beg your pardon, Mr. Bethel,” said she, sobbing, “ but I cannot command myself, when I reflect on the situation of my poor sister and her children ; when I meet that unfeeling man, and know, too
well,

well, what must be the consequence of his conduct."

She was prevented by her emotion from proceeding, and I took that opportunity of saying, "There is nothing new, I hope, my dear Miss Waverly? nothing, just at this moment, to give you deeper concern, or more uneasy apprehensions for Mrs. Verney?"

"Oh! no," replied she, "nothing very new—since the two executions which have been here this fortnight, cannot be called very recent circumstances; they were paid off by I know not what means; and the officers who were in possession of the effects, dismissed only yesterday, yet to-day this unhappy man returns; and returns with an avowed intention, as his confidential servant has been saying below, to raise more money. Oh! Mr. Bethel, could you imagine all my sister has endured in this frightful period, during which she has only once seen her husband—could you imagine what she has endured, and have witnessed

nessed the fortitude, the patience, the courage she has shewn, while suffering not only pain and weakness, but all the horrors of dreading the approach of ruin for her children! you would have said, that the remembrance of that personal beauty, for which she has been so celebrated, was lost and eclipsed in the admiration raised by her understanding."

"In my short conference with her," answered I, "all this was indeed visible, and could not escape the observation of one already impressed with the highest opinion of your sister from the report of Mr. Desmond."

At the name of Desmond, a deep blush overspread the face of the fair Fanny. Not such as that which wavered for a moment on the faded cheek of her lovely sister, when the blood, for a moment, forsaking the heart, was recalled thither by a consciousness that it should not express too warmly the sentiments that sent it forth—Fanny's blush spoke a different, though

not less expressive language, and the tears that were trembling in her eyes, were a moment checked while she clasped her hands together, and cried eagerly—"Desmond!—Oh! how I adore the very name of Desmond!—To him—to your noble friend it is owing, Mr. Bethel, that while I lament the fate of a sister, I do not weep over the equally miserable destiny of a brother."

I have seen Fanny Waverly in the ball-rooms at Bath admired by the men, and envied by the women; and, with all the triumphant consciousness of beauty, enjoying the voluntary and involuntary tribute thus paid to her; but I never till now thought her so handsome, for I never till now thought her interesting—So much more attraction does unaffected sensibility lend to personal perfection, than it acquires from the giddy fluttering airs, inspired by selfish vanity—Yes, indeed, my friend, Fanny Waverly is a very charming young woman, and I was so much pleased with
every

every thing she said of you, and of her own family during the rest of our short conversation, that I have since indulged myself in fancying that it is not at all impossible for you to transfer to her the affection, which while you feel it for her sister, cannot fail to render you unhappy, and which, perhaps, may be attended with fatal consequences to the object of your love.—If your attachment to Geraldine is really as pure and disinterested as you have often called it, it might equally exist were you the husband of her sister, and such an alliance would put it much more in your power than it can ever be otherwise, to befriend and assist her and her children—But I know this is an affair in which you will tell me the heart is not to be commanded, and therefore I will no longer dwell upon it, than to repeat, that were you to see Fanny Waverly now, you would think her not inferior to her sister in personal beauty, (though I own it is of a different character,) and you would be convinced that she is not

as you once believed, destitute of that feminine tenderness, without which I agree with you, that mere beauty is powerless.

And now, my dear Desmond, let me speak of the "thick-coming fancies," with which you so strangely tormented yourself at Hauteville—I have been so much alarmed by your accident since, and have had so many subjects on which to think and write, that I have not touched upon your dream, which you surely are not superstitious enough to dwell upon—You, who are so little subject to the indulgence of prejudice, and who are not unfrequently ridiculing others for being too deeply impressed

"With all the nurse and all the priest has taught."

But why is it that the strongest minds—those who dare examine whatever is offered to them with acute reason, and who reject all, however it may be sanctioned by custom, or rendered venerable by time, that reason refuses to accede to, shall yet sink under the influence of images impressed on

the brain by a disturbed digestion, or a quickened circulation? Alas ! my friend, there appears to be a strange propensity in human nature to torment itself, and as if the physical inconveniencies with which we are surrounded in this world of ours were not enough, we go forth constantly in search of mental and imaginary evils—This is no where so remarkable as among those who are in what we call affluence and prosperity—How many of my acquaintance who have no wish, which it is not immediately in their power to gratify, suffer their imaginations to “play such tricks with them, (I use an expression of Dr. Johnson’s, whose imagination was surely not exempt from the charge) that they are really more unhappy and more truly objects of compassion than the labourer, who lives only to work, and works only to live? — do not however, my dear friend, mean to say, that you are one of these—Your active spirit and feeling heart, secures you for ever against this palsy of the mind—
but

but perhaps, from the charge of indulging other extravagancies, you are not wholly exempt—This attachment to Mrs. Verney, which has given a peculiar colour to your life for three years, and which you still cherish as if your existence were to become insipid without it, is surely a weakness and an impropriety, which such an understanding as yours ought to shake off.—But I will say no more on a topic that is, I know, irksome to you, and indeed, I am too apt to offer advice to those I esteem, without sufficiently considering, that we none of us love to take what we are all so eager to give—I cannot however, drop the subject without remarking, that when in the same letter you describe your reflections on the puerility and inconsequence of the objects that mankind are so anxiously occupied in obtaining, and in the next page relate the terrors occasioned by a dream, the faintest shadow of those fleeting shades, which it seems so absurd to be moved by; I can only repeat, as one is continually

compelled to do—Alas ! pour human nature !

You have obliged me very much by the sketches you have sent me of the people you have conversed with, and the scenes to which you have been witness.—In answer to your remarks and narratives, I observe, that it is an incontrovertible truth allowed even by those who have written professedly against it, that a revolution in the government of France was absolutely necessary ; and, that it has been accomplished at less expence of blood, than any other event, I will not say of equal magnitude, (for I know of none such in the annals of mankind) but of such a nature, ever cost before, is also a position that the hardest prejudice must, in despite of misrepresentations, allow ; but while I contemplate, with infinite satisfaction, this great and noble effort for the universal rights of the human race, I behold, with apprehension and disquiet, such an host of foes arise to render it abortive, that I hardly dare indulge those
hopes

hopes in which you are so sanguine, that uncemented by blood, the noble and simply majestic temple of liberty will arise on the site of the barbarous structure of gothic despotism.

To say nothing of those doubts which have arisen from the want of unanimity and steadiness among those who are immediately entrusted with its construction, I reflect with fear on the force that is united to impede its completion, or destroy it when complete. Not only all the despots of Europe, from those dealers in human blood, the petty princes of Germany, to the sanguinary witch of all the Russias, but the governments, which are *yet called limited monarchies*, and even those which still pass as republics—in every one of these the governments, well we know, pay the venal pen, and the mercenary sword against it—some openly ; the others as far as they dare, without rousing, too dangerously, the indignation of their own subjects—In all these states, there are great bodies of

people, whose interest, which is what wholly decides their opinion, is diametrically opposite to all reform, and, of course, to the reception of those truths which may promote it—These bodies are formed of the aristocracies, their relations, dependents, and parasites, a numerous and formidable phalanx—Hierarchies, whose learning and eloquence are naturally exerted in a cause which involves their very existence. An immense number of placemen and pensioners, who see that the discussion of political questions, leads inevitably to shew the people the folly and injustice of their paying by heavy taxes for imaginary and non-existing services—Crowds of lawyers, who, were equal justice once established, could not be enriched and ennobled by explaining what they have themselves continued to render inexplicable—And last, not least, a very numerous description of people, who, being from their participation of these emoluments, from family possessions, or from successful commerce,

at ease themselves, indolently acquiesce in evils which do not affect them, and who, when misery is described, or oppression complained of, say, "What is all this to us, we suffer neither? and why should we be disturbed for those who do?"—"Chi ben sta, non si muove*," says the Italian proverb.—In short, my friend, I do not, as some politicians have affected to do, doubt the virtue of the French nation, and say *they* are too corrupt to be regenerated—I doubt rather that European states in general, will not suffer them to throw off the corruption, but unite to perpetuate to them what they either do submit to, or *are willing to submit to* themselves—I rather fear, that liberty having been driven away to the new world, will establish there her glorious empire—and to Europe, sunk in luxury and effminacy—enervated and degenerate Europe will return no more.

Let me, dear Desmond, hear soon from

* Those who are well situated desire not to move.

your own hand, that you are content with the success of my negotiation, and with this long account of those for whom you are interested. Let me learn also your future designs, as to returning to England, or staying on the Continent, and above all, that you continue to believe me, with sincere attachment,

Your's, affectionately,

E. BETHEL.

Continue, I beg of you, to write by another hand till you can use your own, and let me have the sketches of such conversation as you may have during your convalescence—I mean those on political or general topics, and not, of course, the more *refined* and *sentimental* dialogues which you may hold with *Madame de Boisbelle*—By the way, I do not quite understand what you mean by saying in your last letter, that you become every day more unworthy the esteem of Geraldine—*You surely think very humbly of yourself.*

L E T T E R VI.

Marseilles, 8th Jan. 1791.

THE first letter I was able to write, was to Geraldine—This, my dear Bethel, is the second ; and it is with extreme pleasure I thank you for your immediate attention to my request, and the propriety with which you seem to have conducted so troublesome a commission—I thank you too for your long letter, and the account, painful as it is, of the scene you saw at Verney's—Gracious heaven ! why is it, that such a cruel sacrifice was ever made ? But I dare not trust myself on this subject, and have made an hundred resolutions never to mention it more ; yet, how avoid writing on what constantly occupies my mind ?—how dismiss from thence, even for a moment, what weighs so heavy on my heart ? Let me, however, assure you Bethel, that though I have no hope, I had

almost said no wish, ever to be more to this lovely, injured woman, than a fond, affectionate brother—yet, that I will never marry Fanny Waverly. I believe that the advantageous picture you have drawn of her is not a flattering one—I admire her person, and think well of her understanding—The symptoms of sensibility and of attachment to her sister which you discovered in her, certainly add those attractions to her character, in which, I know not why it appeared to me to be defective—If I had a brother whom I loved, and whom I wished to see happily married, it would be to Fanny Waverly I should wish to direct his choice—But for myself—No, Bethel, it is now out of the question; we will speak of it then no more; but I will hasten to thank you for those parts of your long and welcome letter that were meant to detach my thoughts from those sources of painful and fruitless regret, which I am, perhaps, too fond of cherishing—Fain, very fain would I shake them off,
my

my friend, but I cannot—nay, I am denied the consolation of talking to you on paper of all I feel—I have often been very unhappy, but I never was quite so wretched as I am at this moment. My anxiety for the fate of Geraldine tears me to pieces, and I cannot return to England immediately, where I should, at least, be relieved from the long and insupportable hours of suspense which the distance now obliges me to undergo—If I could not see her, at least I could hear once or twice a week of her situation, and might, perhaps, be so fortunate as to ward off some of those misfortunes to which from her husband's conduct she is hourly exposed. Do not, however, be alarmed on account of my health; I believe I could now travel without any hazard, but there are circumstances which render it difficult for me to quit this part of France immediately.—My friend Montfleuri presses me extremely to return for some time to his house, and I once proposed doing so, but now I cannot

do that, but shall, I believe, as soon as I am quite well enough to be dismissed from the care of Mr. Carmichael, go by slow journies towards Switzerland, and from thence to Italy—This, however, depends upon events ; and you will see by the manner in which this is written, that I do not at present boast of so perfect a restoration to health as to make any immediate determination necessary.

I perfectly agree with you in the statement you have made of those causes which has made many of the English behold the French revolution with reluctance, and even abhorrence. To those causes you might have added the misrepresentations that have been so industriously propagated ; all the transient mischief has been exaggerated ; and we have in the overcharged picture lost sight of the great and permanent evils that have been removed—All the good has been concealed or denied, and the former government, which we used to hold in abhorrence, has been spoken of
with

with praise and regret—This is by no means wonderful, when we consider how many among ourselves are afraid of enquiry, and tremble at the idea of innovation—How many of the French, with whom we converse in England, are *avanturiers*, who seize this opportunity to avail themselves of imaginary consequence, and describe themselves as men suffering for their loyal adherence to their king; and as having lost their all in the cause of injured loyalty—We believe and pity them, taking all their lamentable stories for granted—whereas the truth is, that no property has been forcibly taken from its possessors—none is intended to be taken—and these men who describe themselves as robbed, had, many of them, nothing to lose—Half the English, however, who hear of these fictitious distresses, are interested in having them credited, and cry, “These are the blessed effects of a revolution!—These private injuries arise from the rashness and folly of touching the settled constitution of a country!”—While others, too indolent to ask even the simple

question—"Is this true?—*are* the individuals thus injured?" shrink into themselves, and say, "Well! I am sure we have reason to be thankful that there is no such thing among us."

But though I have long been thoroughly aware, both of the interested prejudice, and indolent apathy, which exists in England. I own I never expected to have seen an elaborate treatise in favor of despotism written by an Englishman, who has always been called one of the most steady, as he undoubtedly is one of the most able of those who were esteemed the friends of the people—You will easily comprehend that I allude to the book lately published by Mr. Burke, which I received three days since from England, and have read once.

I will not enter into a discussion of it, though the virulence, as well as the misrepresentation with which it abounds, lays it alike open to ridicule and contradiction—Abusive declamation can influence only
superficial

superficial or prepossessed understanding—Those who cannot, or who will not see, that fine sounding periods are not arguments—that poetical imagery is not matter of fact. I foresee *that a thousand pens will leap from their standishes* (to parody a sublime sentence of his own) to answer such a book—I foresee that it will call forth all the talents that are yet unbought (and which, I trust, are unpurchasable) in England, and therefore I rejoice that it has been written, since, far from finally injuring the cause of truth and reason against which Mr. Burke is so inveterate, it will awaken every advocate in their defence.

One of the most striking of those well-dressed absurdities with which he insults the understanding of his country, is that which forcibly reminds me of the arguments in favor of absolute power, brought by Sir Robert Filmer in that treatise, of which Locke deigned to enter into a refutation—This advocate of unlimited government derives the origin of monarchies
from

from Adam, and asserts, that “ Man, not being born free, could never have the liberty to chuse either governors, or forms of government.” He carries, however, his notion of this incapacity farther than Mr. Burke; according to him, man, in general, having been born in a state of servitude since Adam, can never in any case have had a right to chuse in what way he would be governed—Mr. Burke seems to allow that some such right might have existed among Englishmen, previous to the year 1688, but that then they gave it up for themselves and their posterity for ever.

It was mightily the fashion when I left England, for the enemies of the revolution in France, to treat all that was advanced in its favor, as novelties—as the flimsy speculations of unpractised politicians—or the artful misrepresentations of men of desperate fortunes and wild ambition. *Precedent*, however, which seems gaining ground, and usurping the place of com-

mon sense in our *courts*, may here be united with sound reason—if reason be allowed to those great men towards whom we have been taught to look with acquiescence and veneration.

“ When fashion,” says Locke, “ has once sanctioned what folly or craft began, custom makes it sacred, and it will be thought impudence or madness to contradict or question it.” This impudence and madness seems by the venal crew, whose interest it is that *no questions* should arise, to be imputed to all who venture to defend the conduct of the patriots struggling for the liberties of France ; Mr. Burke now loads them with the imputation, not only of impudence and madness, but with every other crime he can imagine, and involves in the same censure, those of his own countrymen, who have dared to rejoice in the freedom of France, and to support the cause of political and civil liberty throughout the world. Now, without committing myself to enter into any thing like an
argument

argument with so redoubtable an adversary; and with a view solely to escape the censure of *broaching novelties*, let me quote a sentence in Locke on civil government, which among the few books I have access to, I happen to have procured. In speaking of conquest, he says,

“ This concerns not their children, (the children of the conquered) for since a father hath not in himself a power over the life and liberty of his child, no act of his own can possibly forfeit it; so that the children, whatever may have happened to the fathers, are free men; and the absolute power of the conquered reaches no farther than the persons of the men who were subdued by him, and dies with them, and should he govern them as slaves, subjected to his absolute power, he has no such right of dominion over their children — he can have no power over them but by *their own consent*; and he has no lawful authority while force, not choice, compels them to submission.”

If

If conquest does not bind posterity, so neither can compact bind it. Mr. Burke does not directly assert whatever disposition he shews to do so, that nothing can be changed or amended in the constitution of England, because the family who now are on the throne derive their sacred right (through a bloody and broken succession) from William the bastard of Normandy; but he maintains, that every future alteration, however necessary, is become impossible, since the compact made for all future generations, between the Prince of Orange, and the self-elected Parliament who gave him the crown in 1688—So, that if at any remote period it should happen, what cannot indeed be immediately apprehended, that the crown should descend to a prince more profligate than Charles the Second, without his wit; and more careless of the welfare and prosperity of his people than James the Second, without his piety; the English must submit to whatever burthens his vices shall impose—
to

to whatever yoke the tyranny of his favourites shall inflict, *because* they are bound by the compact of 1688, to alter nothing that the constitution then framed, bids them and their children submit to *ad infinitum*.

I have been two days writing this letter, with a weak and trembling hand, I now, therefore, dear Bethel, bid you adieu ! I entreat you to write to me as often as possible, for if I quit this place, your letters will follow me.—I recommend to you, as the most essential kindness you can do me, to attend to that interest, which is infinitely dearer to me than my own, and with repeated acknowledgments of all your kindness on a thousand other occasions, but above all on the last. I entreat you ever to believe me

Your's, most gratefully and
affectionately,

LIONEL DESMOND.

L E T-

L E T T E R VII.

TO MRS. VERNEY.

Bath, 11th Feb. 1791.

I WAS uneasy, my dear Sister, at your not writing, and since you have written, I am more uneasy still. The account you give me of yourself and the baby frighten me—Dreary as the season is, I now join with you in wishing you in the country—I beg your pardon if my frankness offends you; but I cannot help saying, you know too well, that your husband really cares not where you are, and will not oppose your going if you desire it, but will, probably, be glad to have you out of the way—My dear Geraldine, it gives me the severest pain to be compelled to write thus, and to break the injunction you have so often laid on me, not to speak my thoughts so freely of Verney—Your health

health is at stake, and I forget every thing else. After all, what do I say, that you have not yourself said internally a thousand times, though your delicate sense of duty (duty to such a man !) makes you acquiesce in patient silence, under injuries that would have made nineteen women in twenty fly out of his house, and play the deuce in absolute desperation ?—How is it possible that you can help being conscious of your perfections, and of his deserving them so little ?—Can you fail to feel, and to compare ?—It is impossible but that you must at

————— “ That fate repine,
“ Which threw a pearl before a swine.”

There is a quotation from *me*, which you will allow to be, at least, a novelty. It will hardly, however, procure my pardon for its pertness, and therefore, I pray you, my dear Geraldine, to forgive me ; or, if you are a little angry, I will learn to bear it, if you will but exert yourself (if exertion

ertion be necessary) to go into the country and be well.

You do not say a word of Mr. Desmond, *and I* can think and talk of nobody else—In hopes of hearing something of him, I have endured the misery of long conversation with that odd old animal his uncle Major Danby—The formal twaddler loves to tell long stories, and can seldom get any body to hear them, unless he can seize upon some stranger who does not know him, and these becoming every day more scarce, he has taken quite a fancy to me, because he finds I listen to him with uncommon patience, and do not yawn above once in ten minutes. The gossiping people here (of which heaven knows there are plenty) have already observed our *tête-à-tête*, and begin to whisper to each other that Miss Waverly has hook'd the rich old Major—I like of all things that they should believe it, and am in hopes of being in the London papers very soon, among the treaties of marriage.—What do you think

Desmond would say to it?—Do you think he would like such a smart young aunt?—Poor fellow!—I have not been able to get at much intelligence about him, and what I have heard is very painful—His uncle has only heard lately, that his health is much impaired by long confinement, and that he is yet unable to travel towards England; but I hope the old croker made the worst of it to me—He persists in saying, that his nephew could not have met with such an accident in England, as if people here did not shoot one another every day, for reasons of much less moment, or for no reason at all—But though I have attempted, whenever he would hear me, to represent this, and to explain and dwell upon the generosity of Desmond's conduct, I have not yet succeeded in convincing him, that it was friendship to my brother, and not any political matter that involved his nephew in this dispute—The good Major, indeed, cannot comprehend how friendship should lead another to incur danger,

ger, for he had never in his life that sort of feeling, which should make him go half a mile out of his way to serve any body. This I have frequently heard from those who knew him as a young man; and I believe sensibility and philanthropy are qualities that do not encrease with years—He retains now nothing of the ingenuous freedom of the soldier, but all the hardness which a military life sometimes gives, and in quitting it, he keeps only the worst part of a profession, that is said to make bad men worse—I don't know why I have said so much about him, unless it is because I have nothing to say of Desmond, and yet cannot entirely quit the subject—He provoked me this morning in the pump-room, by standing up, and in his sharp, loud voice, giving an account, to two or three people that were strangers to him, of the accident that had happened to his nephew in France. An old, upright woman, who was, I immediately saw, a titled gossip, listened for some time very

attentively, and then enquired, in a canting sort of whine, if the affair had not been owing to *the troubles*?—The Major, delighted to have a Lady Bab Frightful interest herself in his story, began it again, and I ran out of the place, half determined, that not even the wish I cannot help feeling to hear now and then of Desmond from him, should tempt me again to enter into conversation with this story-telling old bore.

My mother, who generally agrees to the opinion of her acquaintance, if they happen to be rich, and who is not unwilling to have the obligation Desmond has laid us all under, lightened by supposing some part of the quarrel with the Chevalier de St. Eloy, to have originated in a difference of political opinion, really encourages the Major in his notion, and when they get together, I lose my patience entirely. To your enquiry, how my mother is in health, I can assure you, I have not seen her so well these last eighteen months,

months, and she is now so often in company, is at so many card parties abroad, and has so many parties at home, that, without having been much missed, I might have staid with you much longer; however, I did what appeared to us to be my duty in returning, and I must not regret it, though very certain it is, that all the maternal affections of my mother are more than ever engrossed by her son—She is now impatiently expecting his arrival, and questioning every body she sees, about the probable length of his voyage from Leghorn—It is amazing to me, that with all this tenderness and anxiety for him, she feels no gratitude, or so little, towards the man, without whose interposition, he would never have returned at all—I also wonder it does not occur to her, that it is far from being certain he did embark at Leghorn the time he proposed to do so—For myself, I should not be at all surprized to hear from him at Rome, nor indeed, to learn that he was again the captive of

Mademoiselle de St. Eloy—Let me not, however, my sister, add anticipated to the real evils with which you seem destined to contend—All will yet be well—Desmond will return in perfect health, and brighter days await us. Let me hear from you at least twice a week, and believe me ever, with true affection, your

FANNY.

L E T.

L E T T E R VIII.

T O M I S S W A V E R L Y.

Sheen, near Richmond, Feb. 19th, 1791.

I HAVE delayed answering your letter, my Fanny, till to-day, though I have been in possession of it above a week, languor alone would not have caused this omission, but I have been busied in my little removal to a lodging I have taken here, as Dr. Warren declared it to be necessary, both on my own account, and on that of the infant I suckle, that I should remove from London. Mr. Verney, I know not why, resolutely opposed my going into Yorkshire, nor could my entreaties, or the opinion of the physician, obtain any other answer than that my going thither would be inconvenient to him—I have, alas! no longer the house in Kent to which I was so attached, and therefore,

rather because it is my duty to try to live than because I wish to live—rather for the sake of my poor children than my own—I employed a friend in this neighbourhood to look out for apartments for me, where I could have accommodations for my three children, three servants, and myself—such he fortunately found in a tolerably pleasant situation, and at a reasonable price, a consideration to which I must no longer be indifferent.

Small, however, as the difference is, between my living here or in Seymour-street, and careless of my being either at one place or another, as you too justly observe Mr. Verney to be ; I own I remarked, and remarked with redoubled anguish of heart, that this additional expence, though pronounced to be absolutely necessary to my existence, and that of his child, is submitted to with reluctance by Mr. Verney—I check myself, Fanny—I will not murmur—and I will even reprove you, my sister, for encouraging me in those repinings,

pinings, which, though I cannot always repress, I know it is wrong to indulge—Do not, my love, teach me to yield too easily to a sensibility of evils, which, since they are without remedy, it is better to bear with equality of mind, and with resignation of heart—Alas! mine is but too apt to feel all the miseries of its destiny—but my children and my duty must and shall teach me to submit unrepiningly to fulfil the latter, for the sake of the former—Their innocent smiles repay me for many hours of anxiety, and while they are well around me, I believe I can bear any thing.

You conclude your letter cheerfully, my Fanny, as if you would dissipate the concern which the former part of it must give me on account of Mr. Desmond—Alas! the former part is all real, and the latter only the prophetic hope of a sanguine imagination—“Desmond will return in perfect health, and brighter days await us.”—If he should *not* return, or not return in perfect health!—Amiable as

Mr. Desmond is, and interesting as he must be to every one of his acquaintance, I certainly should not feel so extremely anxious about him, (as my solicitude for my children, is as much as I am well able to bear) were it not for the unhappy circumstance that continually haunts me—I mean, that I involved him in this fatal affair, and that whatever ill consequences finally attend it, will be imputable solely to me—It is this, and this only, that renders me more unhappy about him than you or any of his other friends have reason to be, however great your regard for him, and it is this, that, if the event should in any way be injurious to him, will overcast my days with regret and anguish that must be all my own, for none can share, because none can feel it as I shall—How lightly you can talk, my dear girl, of his uncle, even a moment after naming the intelligence you have collected from him about Desmond, but *you* have no reason to reproach yourself for *his* misfortune—*your*
heart

heart is not weighed down by any of your own—You cannot, and indeed ought not to look forward as I do, to scenes of future sorrow—long, very long, may it be, before you may be compelled to do it—or rather, may nothing but rich and luxuriant prospects ever offer themselves to the eyes of my Fanny.

But I beseech you to check your vivacity when you meet Mr. Danby, and be content to listen to his tiresome stories a little longer, if listening to them is the tax you must pay for hearing of his nephew, I could attend to the most tedious legend with which self-consequence ever persecuted patience, were I but sure that some authentic information, as to the real state of Desmond's health, would close the narrative; such information, without any tax being demanded for it, I used to obtain from his friend Mr. Bethel, but I have now no means of seeing him, as he is gone back to his house in Kent, that house so near the place which I cannot help regret-

ting—Had it not been fold, I could have gone thither now, I might have feen Mr. Bethel continually, he is an excellent man, and is fo much attached to Defmond, that it is pleafant to hear him fpeak of him, indeed he is the only perfon who does juftice to thofe noble qualities of heart and underftanding that Defmond fo eminently poffeffes, but of which three parts of the world know not the value.

Yet I know not whether it was only my being myfelf in dreadfully low fpirits, when I laft faw Mr. Bethel, or whether he was himfelf in a diftrefsed ftate of mind, but methought he fpoke in a very reluctant and defponding way about Defmond, though he affured me that he was entirely out of danger of any kind from the wound, and that the lofs of the ufe of his hand was no longer apprehended—But I found Mr. Bethel knows nothing certainly of Defmond's future intentions; and if he did not deceive me about his health, there is affuredly fome other circumftance relating
to

to him that makes Bethel uneasy—He said much of the friendship Monsieur de Montfleuri had shewn to Desmond in attending him, and of his sister too; that Madame de Boisselle, who has, it is said, been his nurse the whole time. I supposed, when I first heard of her attendance on Mr. Desmond, that she had been a widow, as it seemed unlikely she could otherwise have been sufficiently at liberty for such an exertion of friendship, but Mr. Bethel informed me she is married, but very unhappily, and that her husband, a bankrupt both in fame and fortune, is an emigrant, and is either in Germany or England—Mr. Bethel says the lady, who is extremely beautiful, is now entirely dependent on the Marquis de Montfleuri her brother, whom she cannot oblige more than by the attention she has shewn to his friend—How fortunate she is in having such a brother, how doubly fortunate in being allowed to shew her gratitude to him, by giving her *sisterly* attendance to such a

man as Desmond—Beautiful and accomplished as Mr. Bethel describes her to be, methinks I envy her nothing but the opportunity she has had to soothe his hours of pain and confinement. I used to think once, that Desmond had a very friendly regard for me, but now, in how different a light he must consider us—I have been the cause of his sufferings—it has been the enviable lot of Madame de Boisselle to soften and alleviate them—Mr. Bethel says he calls her Josephine—If her good fortune should still prevail, and her husband should not return from the hazardous exploits in which, it is said, his political principles are likely to engage him, she will, perhaps, become *his* Josephine, for I have persuaded myself that his long stay in France is now more owing to the tender gratitude he must feel for this lady, than to any necessity he is in, on account of indisposition, to remain there.

And now my Fanny, indeed, I cannot conclude without availing myself of my
eldership

eldership once more, to entreat that you would consider whether it would not be better to check that flippancy with which you are too apt to accustom yourself to speak of our mother. Admitting that she has the foibles you represent, of courting the rich—of being too partial to her son, it is not her children who should point them out to the observation and ridicule of others—Believe me, my sister, there is nothing so injurious to that delicate sensibility which you really possess, as indulging this petulance—By degrees, it will become habitual, and the little asperities, which you now give way to only, perhaps, in writing or in speaking to me, will soon be so much matter of discourse that you will forget their tendency, and be insensible of their impropriety—It is true, that I have not lived so much longer in the world as to be able to speak much from experience; but, from the little I have seen of that world more than you have, I think I may venture to assert, that where families
are

are divided among themselves—I mean, where the father or mother disagree with the children, or the brothers and sisters with each other, there is something very wrong among them all, and I protest to you, that were I a man, not beauty, wit, and fortune united, should engage me to marry a woman who shewed a want of duty and gratitude towards either of her parents, but particularly towards her mother—Were I madly in love, I am convinced, that any thing like the ridicule of a daughter so directed, would produce a radical and immediate cure.

Here let me drop the subject, I hope for ever, and to begin one that, I trust, will make amends for any little pain this may have inflicted; let me tell you, that since I have been here, I have found my health and that of my baby, sensibly amend, and that I now hope I shall not be compelled to wean him, though I am not happy, though I know I never can be so, I have, at least, obtained a transient calm.

The

The agitation occasioned by the late painful events, is gradually, though slowly subsiding; I can now return to my books with attention less distracted, and have been reading a description of some of the southern parts of Europe, particularly of the Lyonois, &c.—I should like extremely to see those accounts which I find Mr. Desmond sends to his friend Bethel, because he has so much taste, and is so intelligent a traveller—There was no possibility you know of asking in plain terms for this indulgence, I hinted it as much as I dared, though Bethel did not, or perhaps would not understand me—But to return to myself, and what you would think melancholy, though it is not to me an unpleasant way of passing my time—Dreary as the season yet is, I have betaken myself to my solitary walks in the fields that surround this house, which, for a situation so near London, is extremely pleasant, and quite retired—I find the perfect seclusion, the uninterrupted tranquillity I enjoy now,
soothing

soothing to my spirits, and of course, beneficial to my health, if I do but hear favourable accounts from the continent, and nothing new happens embarrassing in the pecuniary affairs of Mr. Verney, I shall be soon restored to as chearful a state as I am now likely ever to enjoy—Assist the progress of my restoration, my dearest Fanny, by frequent letters, since I cannot have the delight of your company, and cheer with your vivacity, which I love (even in reproving its wildest follies).

Your affectionate

GERALDINE.

I had but just sealed my letter, when a packet was brought me from Desmond himself—Yes, my Fanny, a letter written with his own hand, and not with so much apparent weakness as one would imagine—I hope there is nothing improper in the excessive pleasure this letter gives me—Gratitude can surely never be wrong, or if it can be carried to excess, its excess

is

is here pardonable—I know not what I would say, my spirits are so fluttered—This welcome letter has been very long in coming, I will send you a copy of it in a post or two—Heaven bless you, my Fanny.

L E T.

L E T T E R IX.

T O M R. D E S M O N D.

Hartfield, March 18th, 1791.

I WAS in hopes, my dear Desmond, that long before this, I should have spoken to you once more in England, instead of directing to you in Switzerland. Your letter of the 30th January*, bade me sanguinely hope this, I therefore forbore to write; but instead of seeing you restored to health, to tranquillity, and your country, I receive a melancholy letter from the *pays de Vaud*—Yet you assure me that your arm no longer reminds you of your accident, and I trust to your assurances, as well as to the evidence of your handwriting—You tell me also, that your health is much amended, why then, my friend, this extraordinary depression of

* Which does not appear.

spirits?—I own I am made uneasy, extremely uneasy, in observing it, and cannot help lamenting that your time, your talents, and your temper, are thus wasted and destroyed—Is it, that this fatal passion still obscures your days? or is there, as indeed I strongly suspect, is there some other source of uneasiness more recent, to which I am a stranger? It has been a rule with me, even while you were, in some measure, under my guardianship, never, dear Desmond, to intrude upon you with officious enquiries, nor to ask more of your confidence than you chose to give me—Friendship, like the service of heaven, should be perfect freedom; yet forgive me, if for once I intrude upon your reserve with curiosity that arises solely from my regard for you—Is there in this any circumstance, the pain of which I can remove? if there is, I will be satisfied with such a partial communication as may enable me to be of use to you, without enquiring into particulars you may wish to conceal.

I send

I send you, with other books, one that now engrosses all the conversation of this country, which, from its boldness and singularity alone, and, written as it is, by an obscure individual*, calling himself the subject of another government, could never have attracted so much attention, or have occasioned to the party whose principles it decidedly attacks, such general alarm, if there had not been much sound sense in it, however bluntly delivered—As I had rather hear your opinion of it, than give you my own, I will leave the discussion of politics, to tell you of what passes among your acquaintance—This neighbourhood is almost wholly occupied by the improvements which Sir Robert Stamford is making at Limwell, the place so regretted by Mrs. Verney—The beautiful little wood which overshadowed the clear and rapid rivulet, as it hastens through these grounds to join the Medway, has been cut down, or at least a part of it only

* Paine.

has been suffered to remain, as what he calls a collateral security against the north-east wind, to an immense range of forcing and succession houses, where not only pines are produced, but where different buildings, and different degrees of heat, are adapted to the ripening cherries in March, and peaches in April, with almost every other fruit out of its natural course—The hamadryades, to whom I remember, on your first acquaintance with the Verney family, you address some charming lines of poetry, because it was under their protection you first beheld Geraldine; the hamadryades are driven from the place which is now occupied by culinary deities—The water now serves only to supply the gardeners, or to stagnate in stews for the fattening of carp and tench; heaps of manure pollute the turf, and rows of reed fences divide and disfigure those beautiful grounds, that were once lawns and coppices—Every thing is sacrificed to the luxuries of the table; and the country

country neighbours, though many of them possessed the usual elegancies and superfluities of modern life before, are compelled to hide their diminished heads, when Sir Robert Stamford gives an entertainment—Riches, however, unworthily acquired, are a sure passport to the “mouth of honor,” not only of the common herd of those who are called “gentlemen and ladies,” but to the titled and the high born, who, while they court new-risen opulence, envy, and yet despise the upstart who has obtained it—I never meet this great man myself, as our former connections, and our present estrangement, are so generally known, that we are never invited together, but he is almost always the subject of discourse, at parties where I *do* go, and always spoken of with wonder; for hardly a week passes in which some new improvement in luxury does not excite admiration at his boundless expence, which, from such a man, is supposed to be supported by a great fortune, for, as he has raised himself,

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himself, it seems unlikely that he should so little understand the value of money, as to squander it thus profusely, if he had not a great deal of it. To those, who are more in the secret, all this ought not perhaps to be wonderful; yet, though I know the very extent of Stamford's abilities, and know that he has nothing like eminent talents, though perhaps an acute and active mind; I have, I own, now and then been tempted to wonder at his extraordinary and rapid rise, and have joined the old ladies, who talk him over, in pronouncing him *a wonderfully lucky man*—When I hear of the ostentation with which he displays those acquisitions, which are beyond the reach of others—When I am told, that men of the first rank come to eat his good things, and praise his skill in collecting them—When I learn that the Minister sends for him express, and that no resolution of importance is adopted without consulting him—And recollect how very few years are passed since he was a country Attorney,

Attorney, and rode more miles for half-a-crown than a postillion—I cannot always repress a degree of astonishment, and say,

“ We know the thing is neither new nor rare,

“ But wonder how the devil it got there !*”

It is pleasant enough to hear the conversation that sometimes pass about this man at the dinner and tea tables—The awe that the superiority of riches creates, represses the malignity that envy engenders, though with so much difficulty represses it, that it is every moment obliquely appearing—For my own part, I regard this man with so much contempt, that the only pain I now feel from his residing in my immediate neighbourhood, arises from my regret for the loss of Mrs. Verney, whose society indeed, I had not learned to relish when I was deprived of it. This confession is imprudent, perhaps, my friend, and encouraging that unhappy prepossession which I have always blamed, but

* Pope.

truth extorts it from me, and the more I see of the usual dull round of country visits and country conversation, the more I regret the time, when I was sure to find at Linwell, a woman, who, to the softness of manners of her own sex, unites a strength of understanding, which we believe peculiar to ours, and who, with so capable a head, has a heart so admirably tender—You will be alarmed, perhaps, Desmond, at the warmth of my panegyric, and fancy, that in endeavouring to cure you, I have myself caught the infection—But be at peace, my friend, on that score—though Geraldine, in the two last conversations I had with her, has made me a sincere convert to an assertion of your's, which I used to deny, that he; who has once seen and loved her, could never divest himself of his attachment, yet, I am no longer liable to feel this fatal infatuation in the excess you do, and am only sensible of such regard for her, as a father or brother might feel—I own, that

even the depression of spirit which her unhappy marriage occasions, is not without its charms—but when I see her struggling to palliate what he will not allow her to conceal, the wild absurdities and ruinous follies of her husband—when I see her mild endurance of injuries, and that her patience and sweetness are vainly endeavouring

—————“ To spread

“ A guardian glory round her idiot’s head*.”

I feel respect bordering on adoration, and set her above Octavia, or any of the fair examples in ancient story—Yes! my dear Desmond, I not only acquit you of folly, but have more than once caught myself building for your delightful *chateaux en Espagne*, which, however, I will not feed your sick fancy by sketching, for Verney’s life, notwithstanding his irregularities, is a very good one, and it were there-

* Hayley.

fore much wiser in me to direct your thoughts to the former and more rational advice I gave you, when I expressed my hopes, that you might in time carry your affections to the very lovely and animated Fanny Waverly, who, if I am any judge of the female heart, from the countenance, and the manner, would not let you despair, and who, as she is very far from suspecting your partiality to her sister, perhaps, puts down to her own account the extraordinary exertions of friendship which you have made for her family, in becoming the travelling friend of her brother.

I do not hear that Waverly has yet made his appearance in England, though I have enquired of several of my acquaintance, who are lately come from Bath, and who tell me that his mother, Mrs. Waverly, is distressed by his long delay, and the uncertainty of what is become of him ; that she is compelled to have a party with her all day, who engage her at cards, in order to detach her mind from this insup-

portable anxiety—Fortunate resource!—How these good folks are to be envied, who can, in tranquillity solace, in affliction, console themselves with a rubber! “A blessing on him,” quoth Sancho, “who first invented the thing called sleep, it covers a man over like a cloak”—A blessing, say I, on him who first invented those two-and-fifty squares of painted paper—They blunt the arrows of affliction, “*and reconcile man to his lot*.*”

While the elder lady of the Waverly family is thus diverting the pangs of maternal disquietude, and the younger trying to think less of a certain sentimental wanderer, by flirting, to use her own phrase, with all the smartest men at Bath, who assiduously surround her—Geraldine remains in perfect retirement at a lodging near Richmond, with her children, and only two servants—she has no carriage with her, and never goes out but to walk

* Cowper.

with her little ones ; and having, wisely, declined all visitors, she has not, I hope, yet learned that all Verney's town-carriages and horses, except only a post-chaise, which somebody re-purchased for him, are lately fold—He is himself gone into Yorkshire, whither he absolutely refused to suffer her to go, when country air was prescribed for her health, and it is reported, and I fear with truth, that he has established an hunt there, of which he bears the greatest share of the expence, though it is said to be at the joint charge of himself, Lord Newminster, and Sir James Deybourne. The arrangement at Mooresty Park, is said (and still I believe with too much foundation) to consist of three of the most celebrated courtezans, who are at this time the most fashionable, and of course, the most expensive—Every one of these illustrious personages appropriating one of these ladies for the time of their residence. This has been going on ever since the month of January, and is to end only with

the hunting season—You will wonder, perhaps, how I got at all this intelligence, but my solicitude for Geraldine conquers the dislike I have to enter into that sort of conversation which is called gossiping, and I happen to have an acquaintance at W——, a spinster, somewhat passed the bloom of life, and who, very much against her inclinations, has hitherto remained unfapped by caresses, unbroken in upon by tender salutations*, but, though without fortune, she is of a good family, and being allied to some great people, and having contrived to make herself useful to others, she is received alternately at several fashionable houses, where she flatters the lords and ladies; sits with the young misses while their masters are with them; and reads aloud to the blind or sick dowager, who loves a newspaper or a novel; but though she is thus three parts of the year among her illustrious friends, she chuses always to reserve a home, which

* Sterne.

happens to be a small, neat lodging at W——, where she has been many years an occasional inhabitant.

Now it chanced, that when first Geraldine was married, and came a lovely, blooming creature of eighteen into this neighbourhood, this Miss Elford, was among her earliest visitors.—It is said, that a young and handsome married woman is generally an object of dislike to ladies who are

“ Withering on the virgin thorn,

“ In single blessedness.*”

but Miss Elford, as if to contradict so invidious an assertion, was seen to take a peculiar and lively interest in the welfare of her dear friend Mrs. Verney (for a dear friend she soon became), and her good humour, which had before been but little remarked, became now very eminent—the change was accounted for partly by the acquisition she had made of so pleasant an acquaintance as Mrs. Verney, whose house

* Shakespeare.

within a mile of the town, was extremely convenient to her, and whose coach and servants were always at her command, and partly by the supposed attention of a very handsome clergyman, who having two years before given up a fellowship at Oxford to marry a very pretty woman, whom he passionately loved, had, within twelve months lost her, and now had accepted a curacy at a distance from the scene of his past happiness and misfortune, and in attempting to dissipate his grief, had mixed much in the society of the neighbourhood, and had appeared particularly pleased in that of Miss Elford, who passed for "a most sensible woman."—When Verney settled at Linwell, this gentleman, Mr. Mulgrave, was continually at the house where Miss Elford frequently resided also, and where (especially after Verney gave him a living, which happened to fall at that time) it was supposed their intended union was rapidly advancing to its conclusion; when suddenly, Mr. Mulgrave grew cold
and

and reserved, and the mortified Miss Elford lost once more the prospect of an immediate and fortunate establishment.

Though, till then, Mrs. Verney had been, in her estimation, the best, sweetest, dearest creature in the world, the excessive fondness of Miss Elford declined from this moment; and as she could not suffer herself to think that she had been premature in reckoning on the impression she had made on Mr. Mulgrave, or that she wanted the captivating talents necessary to fix that impression when it *was* made; she took it into her head that Mr. Mulgrave had conceived an improper affection for Mrs. Verney, and though there was probably not the least grounds for this idea, she has cherished it ever since, and consequently hates Geraldine, with an inveterate malignity, which no other cause could raise, or could sustain—Still, however, she conceals this hateful sentiment under the semblance of friendship—She laments, most pathetically, the hard fate of “that sweet

F 5

woman”

woman"—Sheds crocodile tears over the ruinous extravagancies of Verney (of which, however, she has always the earliest intelligence), and tells every body how long she foresaw these fatal propensities in the husband of her charming friend before they broke out—talks of the vanity of all sublunary plans of happiness, and thanks her good God!—for having placed *her* lot, where she is not exposed to these heart-rending vicissitudes.—This good little gentlewoman, then, great part of whose life, I really believe, passes in collecting and dispersing accounts of the failures, failings, faults, and follies of her acquaintance, has been of late more than usually active; and as she finds I listen to her with a greater degree of attention than I used to afford her, and is not aware of the motive I have for doing so, I see she entertains a thousand wandering fancies relative to my assiduity, and eagerly exerts herself to obtain its continuance—I am a widower, about her own age—I have children who may
want

want the care of such a discreet person—I may myself desire a rational companion—Of all these considerations, it is really wonderful to remark the effect, and to observe how amiable, discreet, and reasonable my prude affects to be—I am sorry to encourage hopes, which I am afraid I cannot even for your service, my dear Desmond, realize, but as I have no other means of obtaining such intelligence as you want, and such as indeed appears to me absolutely necessary to enable either of us to assist in dispersing those heavy clouds of calamity that are continually hanging over her, for whom we are both so anxious—I hope I am justified in availing myself of the information so readily given me by my neighbour—I wish I could add that the picture I have drawn of Verney's conduct, owes its darkest touches to the sharp hands of malignant envy, through which it has passed—But on enquiring of other people, who are quite disinterested, and who really

admire and regret the lovely victim of his follies, the circumstances and proceedings of Verney are represented in the same way.

I have had within this last week some symptoms that threaten a return of the gout (if gout it be) that has so long hung about me, and as my friend Banks, on whose skill I have a great reliance, persists in saying, that my future enjoyment of life depends on my having a regular fit, I shall, if these flying complaints are not soon dissipated, go again to Bath, as soon as my lent corn is in the ground, which three weeks will complete—We have hitherto had a remarkable fine season, and my farming is likely to go on most prosperously—Harry is doing well at Winchester, and the masters assure me he will be a very clever fellow—I shall take Louisa with me, and put her to School at Bath for the time I continue there, which will probably be three months—Long, long
before

D E S M O N D. 109

before that time, my dear Desmond, I
hope to hail your return to England, and
to tell you personally, how truly I am,

Your attached and faithful,

ERASMUS BETHEL.

LET.

L E T T E R X.

T O M R. B E T H E L.

Lausanne, April 10th, 1791.

YOUR letter, with a packet of books, reached me here, my friend, by the hands of our old acquaintance Ashby, who took them up on his way, and delivered them safely to me three days ago—How shall I, how ought I to reply to such friendly enquiries, such generous offers as your's?—I can find no words that answer my idea of all I ought to say to thank you—none that seem adequate to excuse that want of confidence, perhaps you will think of gratitude, which I must seem to shew, when I say, that though I am very certainly most unhappy, it is impossible for me to avail myself of your friendship towards the alleviation of my unhappiness, impossible for me even to communicate its source—Notice not, therefore, my despondence, my dear Bethel,

Bethel, its cause cannot be removed, and whatever may be its consequences, be assured that I deserve them all—Every word I write on this subject gives me inexpressible pain, and therefore, I know you will pardon my beseeching you not to renew the topic, assuring yourself, that if at any future time, I can properly take advantage of your counsel, and your friendship, there is not on earth the man to whom I would so readily apply.

I will not, however, in any instance deceive you. My late accident, my present state of health, are neither of them the cause of my remaining abroad—The uneasiness I suffer is not solely on account of Geraldine, though your last letter has increased and rendered almost insupportable the solicitude I feel for her—yet amidst all the anguish with which my mind dwells on the calamities that surround her, it is most soothing and consolatory to hear from yourself that she has found a friend in you; and that, being a convert to the united

1

power

power of goodness, understanding, and beauty, you have been taught by their invincible attraction, to pity, and even to approve the attachment you were so lately disposed to condemn and ridicule, and which you so lately and undeservedly gave me credit for having conquered.

In lodgings at Sheen, with only her children with her!—one of the houses, that in which she used to delight, sold—the other, the ancient house of her husband's family, inhabited by his courtezans, and his dissolute companions!

Yet amid all this, instead of returning evil for evil, what is her conduct?—she goes to a cheap retirement; she is occupied only in the care of her children; instead of the retaliation which we see so usually adopted by young and beautiful women, whose husbands neglect and ill treat them, it seems as if *her* patient sweetness encreased in proportion to the provocation she receives. Accursed be he, who shall attempt to degrade a character so noble, to sully a mind

mind so angelic—Never will I be that man—But if I continue in this strain, I shall get into those regions of heroics, that are, you say, beyond the reach of your reasonable and calm comprehension; so we will talk of something else; and in order to convince you that I can occasionally play the Mentor, instead of being always your Telemachus, I am going to give you something very like a lecture—My dear Bethel, why do you suffer that Sir Robert Stamford to occupy and inflame to resentment a mind like your's—When you regret, that the place where I first saw Geraldine, and where I have so often repeated

“ *Benedetto sia 'l giorno, e'l mese, e l'anno
E la stagione e'l tempo, e l'ora e'l punto,
E'l bel paese, e'l loco ov'io fui giunto
Da duo begli occhi, che legato m'hanno.**”

I understand all your friendly emotions, and rejoice that you enter with such enthusiasm into those feelings which, till

* Petrarch.

you were more acquainted with Geraldine, you treated as romantic puerilities—but when the fungus growth of this arrogant upstart has so much share in your indignation, I am hurt, that the elevated spirit of my friend can be ruffled by a being so utterly contemptible.

“ Small things make mean men proud.*”

Can you then wonder, that to such a man, his sudden, and, as he well knows, his *undeserved* exaltation is matter of ostentatious triumph? but does it make him respectable in the world? and does not even the basest part of that world, while it courts despise him?—Leave him then, my friend, to waste in swinish excess, fums, which he has earned by doing dirty work, at the expence of those who are now called the “ swinish multitude,†” hundreds of whom might be fed by the superfluities of

* Shakespeare.

† Vide Mr. Burke's description of the people.

his luxurious table—Leave him to the wretched adulation of the fawning parasite, who can stoop to admire his fine places, and be repaid by the delicacies of his table. Leave him to be an example of how little merit is required in our country to reach the highest posts of profit and confidence—an example of a placeman filling useless places—of a pensioner paid for the mischief he has assisted in doing to the nation, whose governors have thus rewarded him—But let not *your* mind, possessing, as it does, all the upright principles, the generous independence, that once characterised the English gentleman, be disturbed by the disgusting insolence of such a being, while you feel, that the humblest labourer who cultivates your ground, is a more honest and a more respectable man.

In reading the book you sent me, which I have yet had only time to do superficially, I am forcibly struck with truths, that either were not seen before, or were (by men, who did not wish to acknowledge them)

them) carefully repressed; they are bluntly, sometimes coarsely delivered, but it is often impossible to refuse immediate assent to those which appear the boldest; impossible to deny, that many others have been acceded to, when they were spoken by men, to whose authority we have paid a kind of prescriptive obedience, though they now have called forth such clamour and abuse against the author of "the Rights of Man"—My other letters from England are filled with accounts of the rage and indignation which this publication has excited—I pique myself, however, on having, in my former letter, cited against Burke a sentence of Locke, which contradicts as forcibly as Paine has contradicted one of his most absurd positions—I know, that where sound argument fails, abusive declamation is always substituted, and that it often silences where it cannot convince—I know too, that where the politics are obnoxious, recourse is always had to personal detraction; I therefore wonder not, that

on your side the water, those who are averse to the politics of Paine, will declaim instead of arguing; and those who feel the force of his abilities, will villify his private life, as if that was any thing to the purpose; I do, however, wonder, that these angry antagonists do not recollect, that the clamour they raise, serves only to prove their fears; and that if the writings of this man are, as they would represent, destitute of truth and sound argument, they must be quickly consigned to contempt and oblivion, and could neither be themselves the subject of alarm, or render their author an object of investigation and abhorrence; but the truth is that, whatever may be his private life, (with which I cannot understand, that the public have any concern) he comes as a political writer, under the description given of a controvertist by the acute author, to whom Monsieur d'Hauteville has so terrible an aversion.

“ A t'on jamais vue un plus abominable homme? il expose les choses avec un fide-

lité si odieuse ; il met sous les yeux le pour & le contre avec un impartialité si lâche ; il est d'un clairté si intolérable, qu'il met les gens qui n'ont que le sens commun, en état de douter, & même de juger.*”

I frequent no society here willingly, as I find my mind by no means in a state to attend to the common occurrences of life without fatigue ; and that both my spirits and health suffer, by the exertion which a man is obliged to make in company for which he does not care a straw. However, as Ashby had been very obliging to me in bringing my packets from Marseilles, and depended on me for introduction here, I went with him yesterday to the house of a man of some consideration, where there is generally the best company of the place assembled, and where there then happened

* Was there ever such an abominable fellow ? he exposes the truth so odiously ; he sets before our eyes the arguments on both sides with such horrible impartiality ; he is so intolerably clear and *plain*, that he enables people who have only common sense, to doubt, and even to judge.—Voltaire.

to be, among many others, French and Swifs, two Englifhmen, one, a Mr Cranbourne, who has accompanied, in their travels, feveral men of rank, and now is returning to England with a Lord Fordingbridge, whose minority is juft ended, and who is returning to England to take his feat in the houfe of peers.

Mr. Cranbourne, who was, I find, bred to the law, has all that fupercilious and dogmatical manner, which an education for the bar very frequently gives—he asserts with violence, and maintains with obftinacy; and though the world doubted either of the profundity of his judgment, or the power of his eloquence, fo that he was unfeed and unretained during the courfe of thofe years that he called himfelf a counfellor, he is fo perfectly convinced of his eminence in both, that he is on all occafions, not a pleader, but a decider, and fits felf-elected on the judgment feat, on every occafion of controverfy—His travels, without divesting him of
the

the querulous asperity of the bar, have made him a solemn coxcomb in every other science; and he prides himself on having formed his present pupil on his own model, and declares, that he will make a superior figure as an orator in the British senate.

The boy, who has thus been taught to consider himself as a miracle of elegance and erudition, unites the flippant airs of a young man “of a certain rank”—with the sententious pertness of an attorney’s clerk just out of his time—I found him, on our entrance, standing in the midst of a circle, declaiming against the French government; and pouring forth a warm eulogium on Mr. Burke—The lordling affects an Italian accent, and to have forgotten the harsh tones of his native language, when he deigns to speak it—“Pray,” said he, “tell me you, who know, what is this other book—this answer to Burke, that I have been bored with—somebody wanted me to read it, but I had neither
patience

patience nor inclination—It seems from the account other people have given me, to be very seditious ; I wonder they don't punish the author, who, they say, is quite a low sort of fellow—What does he mean by his Rights of Man, and his equality ?—What wretched and dangerous doctrine to disseminate among the lazzaroni* of England, where they are always ready enough to murmur against their betters ? I hope our government will take care to silence such a demagogue, before he puts it into the heads of *les gens sans culotes*, in England, to do as they have done in France, and even before he gets some of the ragged rogues hanged—*They* rights ! poor devils, who have neither shirts nor breeches !”

You have accused me of laying by in company, even where the conversation has turned on topics that interest me most. I own I had done so now, partly from de-

* Lazzaroni, a word descriptive of people reduced to the utmost poverty and wretchedness.

pression of spirits, and partly from the reluctance I felt to engage in "wordy war" against prejudice and absurdity.—I now, however, ventured to enquire of Lord Fordingbridge, whether these men whom he called lazzaroni, might not be urged to revolt by those very miseries which exposed them to his contempt? and whether such extreme poverty and wretchedness did not shew the necessity of some alteration in the government where they existed?—If government be allowed to be for the benefit of the governed, not the governors, surely these complaints should be heard. "Why, what would you have government do?" answered he—"How can it prevent such sort of things?—Our's, for example, against which these stupid dogs are complaining in libellous pamphlets and papers, by what means can it obviate these discontents?—Would you have the Minister keep a flop-shop, to supply the *sans culotes* with those necessaries *gratis*?"—This convincing argument, which the whole

whole company applauded with a loud laugh, gave my right honourable adversary such confidence in his own powers, that, without permitting me to reply, he proceeded.—“ I insist upon it, that there is no cause of complaint in England; nobody is poor, unless it be by their own fault; and nobody is oppressed; as to the common people, the mob, or whatever you please to call them; what were they born for but to work? And here comes a fellow and tells them about their rights—They have no rights—they can have none, but to labour for their superiors, and if they are idle, 'tis their own faults, and not the fault of the constitution, in which there are no imperfections, and which cannot by any contrivance be made better.”

“ Your lordship,” answered I, “ whose comprehensive mind probably looks forward to the time when you will yourself make one of that illustrious body that Mr. Burke describes as the Corinthian pillar of polished society, has, I dare say, in

travelling through other countries, made the government of your own your peculiar study, and by contrasting it with those you have seen, you have learned to appreciate its value—That it is superior to most, perhaps, to all of them, I am willing to allow, yet I cannot pronounce it to be without imperfections, where I observe such dreadful contrasts in the condition of the people under it—Who can walk through the streets of London without being shocked with them?—*Here*, a man, who possesses an immense income which has been given him for his servile attendance, or his venal voice, an income, which is paid from the burthenfome imposts laid on the people, is seen driving along in a splendid equipage; his very servants cloathed in purple and fine linen, and testifying, by their looks, that they ‘fare sumptuously every day’—There, extended on the pavement, lies one of those very people whose labour has probably contributed to the support of this luxury, begging wherewithal to continue

tinue his degraded existence, of the disgusted passenger, who turns from the spectacle of his squalid wretchedness—In our daily prints, this shocking inequality is not less striking—In one paragraph, we are regaled with an eulogium on the innumerable blessings, the abundant prosperity of our country; in the next, we read the melancholy and mortifying list of numberless unhappy debtors, who, in vain, solicit, from time to time, the mercy of the legislature, and who are left by the powers who *can* relieve them, to linger out their unprofitable lives, and to perish, through penury and disease, in the most loathsome confinements, condemned to feel

———‘The horrors of a gloomy gaol,
Unpitied and unheard, where misery moans;
Where sickness pines; where thirst and hunger
burn,

And poor misfortune, feels the lash of guilt.*’

To-day, we see displayed in tinsel panegyric, the superb trappings, the gorgeous

* Thomson.

ornaments, the jewels of immense value, with which the illustrious personages of our land amaze and delight us—To-morrow, we read of a poor man, an ancient woman, a deserted child, who were found dead in such or such alleys or street, ‘supposed to have perished through want, and the inclemency of the weather;’ and is it possible to help exclaiming,

———‘take physic pomp—
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel;
So shalt thou shake the superflux to them,
And shew the heavens more just.*”

The young peer, who had shewn more patience than I expected, now interrupted me—“All this is very fine, Sir,” said he, “but give me leave to say, that it is all common place declamation, (that was true enough) and does not go to prove, that the form of our government is defective—misery exists every where, and is intended to exist; even according to your own quo-

* Shakespeare.

tation, it is allowed—

‘ And shew the heavens more just.’

It is heaven so decides then, and by no means the fault of governments—It is the lot of humanity, and cannot be changed.”
“ Thus it is,” answered I, “ that we dare to arraign our God for the crimes and follies of man—that God, who certainly made none of his creatures to be miserable, nor called any into existence only to live painfully, and perish wretchedly ; but when the blind selfishness of man distributes what Providence has given ; when avarice accumulates, and power usurps, some have superfluities, which contribute nothing to their happiness, others hardly enough to give them the means of a tolerable existence—Were there, indeed, a sure appeal to the mercies of the rich, the calamities of the poor might be less intolerable ; but it is too certain, that high affluence and prosperity have a direct tendency to harden the temper. How few do we meet with

who can feel for miseries they cannot imagine, and are sure they can never experience?—How many, who have hearts so indurated by their own success or fortune, that they are insensible to generosity, and even to justice?—How many more, who would, perhaps, be in some degree alive to the sensations of humanity, if their business, or their pleasures allowed them time to think, but who are so occupied by either the one or the other, and so little in the habit of attending to disagreeable subjects, that they shrink from the detail of poverty and sorrow, and would be disgusted with those who should attempt to intrude with such images

‘ On ears polite ?’

“ Well, Sir,” cried my lord, in whose hands the rest of the company continued to leave an argument in which they thought he had greatly the advantage—
“ Well, Sir ! and what then ?—Have we not laws, by which our poor are amply, magnificently provided for ?”

“ That

“ That they were intended to be so, I believe,” answered I, “ but how those laws are perverted, let the frequent, the meritorious, but unsuccessful attempts to amend them, bear witness—Their abuse; the heaviness with which they press on one part of the community, without relieving the other, is one of the greatest evils we complain of; but here, as in twenty other instances, every attempt at redress is silenced by the *noli me tangere*, which our constitution has been made to say, and which has been echoed, without enquiry, by all who have either interest in preserving the inviolability even of its acknowledged defects, or who have been brought up in prejudices, that make them believe that our ancestors were so much wiser than we are; that it is a sort of sacrilege to doubt the perfection of the structure they raised, and to imagine an edifice of greater strength and simplicity—If these prejudices are enforced and continued—if every attempt to repair what time has injured, or

amend what is acknowledged to be defective, is opposed as dangerous, and execrated as impious; let us go on till the building falls upon our heads, and let those who escape the ruins, continue to meditate on the prodigious advantage of this holy reverence, and to boast of the happiness of being Englishmen !”

“ I should be glad, Sir, since you, at least, seem to have none of this respect,” said the young lawyer, and who now thought he had been silent long enough—

“ I should be glad if your sagacity would point out some of those other defects in the structure of the English constitution, which, doubtless, you have discovered.”

“ That is not very difficult,” I replied, “ and I should begin by saying, that its very foundation is defective, from the inequality of representation ; (were that assertion not allowed by every one as an incontrovertible truth ; and had not there been such repeated mockeries, such frequently renewed farces acted, to amuse us with
pretended

pretended efforts at a reform, which never were intended, nor can ever be carried into effect, but by the unanimous and determined perseverance of the people)—To drop the metaphor, let me turn to another very common subject of acknowledged complaint—I mean the penal laws—laws, by which the property and the life of the individual is put on an equal footing, and by which murder, or a robbery to the amount of forty shillings, are offences equally punished with death—Is it possible to reflect without horror, on the numbers that are every year executed, while every year's experience evinces, that this prodigality of life renders the punishment familiar, and prevents not crimes?—Is there a session at the Old Bailey, where boys, from fifteen to twenty are not condemned?—boys, who, deserted from their infancy, have been driven, by ignorance and want, to violate the laws of that society, which

‘Shakes her incumbered lap, and throws them out.’*

* Cowper.

Why do we boast of the mildness and humanity of laws, which provides punishment instead of prevention? And can we avoid seeing, that while they give up yearly to the hands of the executioner greater numbers than die the victims of public justice in all the other European countries reckoned together; we must, in spite of our national vanity, acknowledge, either, that the English are the worst, and most unprincipled race of men in Europe, or, that their penal laws are the most sanguinary of those of any nation under heaven. Attempts have been made to remedy this enormity, which I cannot help calling a national disgrace; but, like every other endeavour at partial correction of abuses, these humane efforts have been baffled on the usual principle, that nothing must be touched, nothing must be changed"—
“ Really, Sir,” said Mr. Cranbourne, “ you are a most able advocate for beggars and thieves.”

“ At

“ At least, Sir, I am a disinterested one, for I plead for those who cannot fee me—but it is not for beggars and thieves, as you are pleased to say, that I plead—it is for the honor of my country—for the reform of the laws, which occasion beggars and thieves to exist in such numbers; while we ostentatiously boast, that those laws are the best in the world. Nor is it only the penal laws that seem to want alteration; allow me to observe, that from the continual complaints of the defects of our law, as it relates to the protection of property, it does not seem to deserve the praise of superiority which we arrogantly claim—We hear every day of suits in which even success is ruin; and we know, that far from being able to obtain in our courts, that speedy, clear, decisive, and impartial justice, which, from their institution they are designed to give, a victory (obtained, after being sent through them all) is often much worse than a retreat—the remedy more fatal than the disease—

So

So conscious are even the lawyers themselves of this, that if one of them (*as may happen*) has a personal regard for his client, and is willing to wave pecuniary advantage in his favor, such a lawyer will say—"Do any thing—submit to any compromise—put up with any loss, rather than go to law"—One of our courts is called that of Equity, where the widow, the orphan, the deserted and unhappy of every description, (who have money) are to find protection and redress; yet it is too certain, that such are the delays, such the expences in this court, that the ruinous tediousness of a Chancery suit is become proverbial—the oppressed may perish, before they can obtain the remedy they seek; and where, under the direction of this court, litigated property is to be divided, it continually happens, that, by the time a decision is obtained, there is nothing to divide—The poet I just now quoted, says,

————— 'In this rank age,
Much is the patriot's weeding hand required*.'

* Thomson.

But alas!—especial care is taken, that
neither reason nor patriotism shall touch too
rudely

‘ The *toils* of law, where dark, insidious men,
Have cumbrous added to perplex the truth,
And lengthen simple justice into trade.*’

And yet

‘ How *glorious* were the day that *saw these broke*,
And every man within the reach of right.†’

“ As to your poets,” cried Mr. Cranbourne superciliously—“ There is no bringing argument against their flowery declamation ; fine sounding words about rights and liberties, are imposing to superficial understandings, but cannot convince others—fine flourishing words are not arguments.”

“ Nor does there,” said I, “ need arguments, on what I have asserted—they are matters of fact, and not of speculation or opinion—truths, which cannot be

* Thomson.

† Ibid.

denied, and which it would require some skill to palliate."

"As to truth, Sir, it is not always proper to speak it, nay, it is not always safe to the well-being of a state—The question, I think is, not whether a thing be exactly conformable to your Utopian and impracticable schemes, but whether it be expedient—We know that *truth is not expedient*, and that it is the business of government to enforce obedience, without which it would not go on; not to listen to the reasoning of every wild dogmatist, who fancies himself a philosopher, and able to mend what is already good—all such should be prevented from disseminating their pernicious doctrines, which serve only to make men discontent with their situation, to raise murmurs, and to clog the wheels of government."

This sentence, which was most consequentially delivered, was applauded by all the party, as I had nothing to offer against it, but that truth which had just
been

been pronounced to be inexpedient, I declined the contest, saying only, “ If truth is not to be spoken, Sir, in a government, calling itself free, least it should be understood by the people, who are governed ; and prevent their freely supplying the oil, that facilitates the movement of the cumbrous machine—If facts, which cannot be denied, be repressed ; and reason, which cannot be controverted, be stifled ; the time is not far distant, when such a country may say, adieu liberty !—Let them, therefore, if they are content to do so, begin with expelling those who dare speak truth, and are so impudent as to reason—‘ *Tous ces gens qui raison sont la peste d’un etat.**’ I then left my adversary to enjoy the triumph of his imaginary superiority, and wandered away alone, indulging contemplations, mournful contemplations, on far other subjects.—The moment I am in solitude, the image of

* Voltaire—‘ All these reasoning people are the very curses of a government.’

Geraldine in distress, Geraldine contending with irremediable misfortunes, recurs to me; and other subjects of regret, add bitterness to my reflections; perhaps, therefore, I should do wisely, to mix more in society, where I must, of course

‘ Disguise the thing I am,
By seeming otherwise.’

But I am so poor at dissimulation, that the pain of attempting it, is more harassing than the thoughts I would fly from.

Write to me very frequently, my friend; and remember as he wishes to be remembered,

Your’s ever, most affectionately,

LIONEL DESMOND.

L E T.

L E T T E R X I.

T O M R S. V E R N E Y.

Bath, April 20, 1791.

I AM not surpris'd, my dear sister, but I am very sorry you have had a visit from your husband, and his foreign and English companions—I foresee no possible good that can arise from it, though I will not affect so much prescience as to point out exactly the evils I apprehend; one of which, however, you must yourself see, I mean the expences that Verney will be drawn into to give himself consequence among these, his new friends; but, perhaps, he may be content to exhibit his Yorkshire-house, with some of the inhabitants he had lately there, to do its honors, and may spare you, notwithstanding what he said about your going down thither—Believe me, I would not have named this
circum-

circumstance, as you have so often reproved me for speaking with asperity of Verney, could I have supposed it possible that you can be ignorant of the party who were so lately collected there, or of the real reason which made him oppose your going thither with your children, when the country was pronounced absolutely necessary for you by your physicians; forgive me, pray, if I thus renew disagreeable recollections, but I do not love you should now go where such people held so lately their profligate societies—I do not love that my Geraldine should appear a neglected and unhappy wife, presiding in the same scenes that so recently witnessed the orgies of Verney, Scarfsdale, Deybourne, and Newminster, with abandoned prostitutes—Shall I go farther, and add, that I do not love my Geraldine should be where Scarfsdale is at all—you have often yourself observed his behaviour; and, as he knows you cannot fail to understand it, surely it is inconsistent with your character to allow him an oppor-

opportunity of repeating it ; do not go to Moorfly Park, my sister, if you can avoid it ; and if it cannot otherwise be evaded, without a violation of what you think your duty—obedience!—unqualified obedience! —I will contrive, that my mother shall make a point of your coming hither ; a request which Verney will not refuse, since he believes that he owes to her the discharge of those two most troublesome debts ; (though it certainly was not by her they were discharged) nor, were some little gratitude out of the question, (which, perhaps, with him it might be,) would he, however impolitic he is, hazard offending my mother, while he feels the daily probability of his being under the necessity of asking other pecuniary favors.

Let me hear, by an early post, that you determine on this, or some other equally proper scheme—Again let me ask your forgiveness, if I have said too much, and I entreat you to impute it to the tender affection I bear you, which is, you know, in-

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herent,

herent, and has grown up with me from my first consciousness of existence—Alas! if I did not love you, what else should I have to love in the world? My other sister is so much older, that I have always had my affection for her, “chastised by fear,” and she is now afar off, and time and distance are cruel enemies, even to the ties of blood—My brother!—alas! does he care for any of us, and is it possible to waste ones affection on apathy and indecision?—My mother! I trust, I venerate and regard her, as my only parent; I think myself indebted to her for the trouble she has taken during my infancy and my childhood, and for that portion of regard which she is able to spare me (since I believe the affections are involuntary) from her son; but I have felt too much awe, to be sensible towards her, of that sympathetic and gentle affection which unites me to you—to you, my Geraldine, whose soft temper is ever ready, even amidst your friendly chidings, to plead for your flip-
pant

pant Fanny, while *her* heart finds respondent sentiments only in your's—Ah! would to heaven I dared entrust you with one, which is——but no: you have too many troubles of your own—Never, never, may your tenderness for me add to their number.

Your uneasiness about my brother is now, I hope, relieved, at least so far as depends on knowing where he is—My mother, however, is so far from feeling herself contented at the accounts he has sent her of his journey to the Archipelago, and his Grecian importations, that she is, if possible, more uneasy and more restless than she has been since his absence; for my part, I think he is quite as well at Venice, with his Cypriot, as he would be at Paris, or in London, with any connection of the same sort, that he might form at either of those places; and certainly we have much less reason to be dissatisfied, than if he had added to our family alliances,

ces, by a union with that of the illustrious house of St. Eloy.

That name brings to my mind, or rather to the end of my pen, another name, I mean, that of Desmond. His uncle, who is still here, is grown quite coy upon that subject, though willing enough to talk to me upon any other; or if I continue, at any time, to oblige him to speak upon it, his answers are peevish, short, and unsatisfactory—I protest I am half inclined to believe the venerable veteran is in love with me himself, and is jealous of my grateful recollection of his nephew—Oh! how I should be delighted to have the power of teizing this old petrification. But, alas! my dear sister, is all exerted in vain, the heart of the Major is composed of such impenetrable stuff, that, I believe, there is no plaguing him any way.

Now do I long to tell you a little of what is passing here; but, I know, the gossip of this place is rather irksome than
pleasing

pleasing to you; and I am often rather re-
proved than thanked, for endeavouring to
amuse you with the events, real or ima-
ginary, which occupy us here, and gives
us the requisite supplies of conversation for
the tea and card parties; but, indeed, my
Geraldine, if you deprive me, by your
rigid aversion to what you call detraction,
of such a resource, I know not what there
will remain for me to write about, and to
fill those long letters which alone satisfy
you; I must not say much of any of our
own family, because you say it is pert, and
undutiful, and I know not what; if I
could repeat only good of the people I am
among, you would let me fill quires of
paper about them; but, as it is, if I re-
port only what I hear, you accuse me of
being as spitefully scandalous as the dowa-
gers, who sit in tremendous committees on
the reputations of the week—You know,
I never am allowed to converse with any of
the literary people I meet, as my mother
has a terrible aversion to every thing that

looks like a desire to acquire knowledge; and for the same reason, she proscribes every species of reading, and murmurs, when she cannot absolutely prohibit the fashionable, insipid novel.

There is so much enquiry of the sage, matronly gentlewomen of her acquaintance, who are, as she believes, deep in the secret, as to *what* books are proper, who are the authors, and whether there be “any offence in them;” that, by the time these voices are collected, I find, more than half I propose reading, absolutely forbidden—Novels, it is decided, convey the poison of bad example in the soft semblance of refined sentiment—One contains an oblique apology for suicide; a second, a lurking palliation of conjugal infidelity; a third, a sneer against parental authority; and a fourth, against religion; some are disliked for doctrines, which, probably, malice only, assuming the garb of wisdom, can discover in them; and others, because their writers have either,
in

in their private, or political life, given offence to the prudery, or the party of some of these worthy personages, whom my mother, relying on their reputation for sanctity and sagacity, chuses to consult; and thus I am reduced to practise the *finesse* of a boarding-school miss, and to hide these objectionable pages, from an inquisition not less severe than that which the lovely Serena* sustained, or I must confine myself to such mawkish reading as is produced, “in a rivulet of text running through a meadow of margin,” in the soft semblance of letters, “from Miss Everilda Evelyn, to Miss Victorina Villars”—How then, my sister, am I to find any thing to say but of living characters? or how can I help being satirical against those who will not let me be sentimental?—I might, indeed, read history; but whenever I attempt to do so, I am to tell you the truth, driven from it by disgust—

* Triumphs of temper.

What is it, but a miserably mortifying detail of crimes and follies?—of the guilt of a few, and the sufferings of many, while almost every page offers an argument in favor of what I never will believe—that heaven created the human race only to destroy itself; and that in placing the various species of it, in various climates, whence they acquired various complexions, habits, and languages; their Creator meant these men should become the natural enemies of each other, and apply the various portions of reason he has allotted them, only in studying how to annoy and murder each other.

But I am wandering, in my wild way, from the point; and, in my complaints, that the pretty, soothing tales of imagination are prohibited, while the hideous realities of human life affright me, I had nearly forgotten what I was going to say, which is not at all scandalous—Oh no!—it is, on the contrary, an event at which you will rejoice—Your old friend, Miss

Elford, has, at last, met with a lover, who really purpofes to become her husband—He is a phyfician ; very well looking, and twelve or fourteen years younger than herfelf—She is in love !—Oh ! undefcribably in love—And the Doctor forefees, in her extenfive connexions, advantages likely to arife to him in his profeflion, that will, he thinks, more than counterbalance the trifling wants of fortune, beauty, and youth—I dare not paint to you the ridiculous love fcenes that this tender pair exhibit—You have feen Mifs Elford in love once before, and can, perhaps, imagine how ſhe expreffes now a ftill more ardent paſſion ; and with what airs of antiquated coquetry ſhe recalls the Doctor to his allegiance, if, peradventure, ſhe detects his eyes wandering towards any of the younger and handsomer part of the company—The idea here is, that they are to be married very ſoon, and I really wiſh they may, if it be only in the hope, that Mifs Elford, in having a husband of her own, will be fo

engaged by her own unexpected good fortune, as to let the rest of the world remain for some time unmolested. I cannot help it, my dear sister, if, in despite of your gentle admonitions, I do hate this little, shrivelled, satirical Sybil—It was from her, I find, that the history of my brother's adventures with the St. Eloy family got abroad here, with numberless additional circumstances that never happened; and it is of her, that my mother learned what I wished to conceal from her, the parties that Verney lately had in Yorkshire.—Oh! if you could have heard how she canted about “her dear, her amiable Mrs. Verney;” while she could not disguise the pleasure she took in describing your husband's foibles—you would have been convinced of what I always told you; that under uncommon hypocrisy, she conceals uncommon malignity—As to myself, I find she goes about talking of me in such terms as these: “Did you see dear Miss Waverly at the ball last night?—Was she not

not charming?—I think she never looked so well; and really I begin to be a convert to the opinion of those, who said, last year, when she first came out, that she was quite as handsome as her second sister, Mrs. Verney, the celebrated beauty—Mrs. Verney, poor, dear creature!—(I have an amazing regard for her, and have loved her from *our childhood*, though she is two or three years younger than I am!) Mrs. Verney is a little altered, though still so very young—Poor thing!—troubles, like her's, are great enemies to beauty, which is but as the flower of the morning; but however she may be changed in appearance, she is still most amiable—indeed, more so, as to gentleness of temper, than Miss Waverly, though *she* is a sweet girl, and has no fault, except, perhaps, a little, a very little too much vivacity, which, it is the great object of my worthy friend, her mother, to check; judging, indeed, very truly, that a young person, so much followed and admired, cannot be too reserved and cau-

tious."—Yes! and, in consequence of this impertinent opinion, this odious tabby (who says she is only a year or two younger than you, though she will never see forty again) has made my mother so full of fears and precautions, that I am neither to read any books but those that are ordered by the Divan, of which she is deputy chairwoman, or to speak to any men but old fograms, such as Major Danby; or men of large fortune—My mother need not be so apprehensive; first, because I have not the least inclination to set out for Scotland with any of the insignificant butterflies, whom I like well enough to have flutter about me in public; and secondly, because, if I had such a fancy, there is not one of them who has the least notion of marrying a young woman without a fortune, or with a very small one—Even the fortunate beings who are not proscribed, men who can make a settlement, have, for the most part, but little inclination to encumber themselves with a portionless wife; and
among

among them all, I know none who answer my ideas of what a man ought to be— Alas! there is but one in the world whom I should select as the hero of my Romance, if I were in haste to make one.

But you must give me leave to detest Miss Elford a little; though, indeed, I have not in my heart room for many other sentiments than those of anxiety and tenderness for you, my dear Geraldine. Write soon, and explicitly, of your intentions, to

Your affectionate and faithful,

FANNY WAVERLEY.

L E T T E R XII.

Seymour Street, 27th April, 1791.

YES! my fister, I knew of the way in which Mr. Verney lived when he was laft in Yorkfhire, though I never mentioned it, and had fome hope it might have efcap-ed my mother's knowledge and your's—Alas! Fanny! I *cannot* be ignorant, how-ever I defire to appear fo, of the extreme bitternefs of the lot to which I am condemned; but while you love me—while my charming children are well—while my mother thinks of me with fome intereft—and let me add, while I have a few friends, whofe regard is fo well worth poffeffing, I will not fink under it; but will fupport myfelf by the reflexion, that I do my duty, and, at leaft, deferve a better fate—I now haften to the other parts of your letter—You will fee, by the date of this, that I am returned to London—and you well know

know how much against my inclination— However, it was thought better than going into Yorkshire; and fortunately for me, the Duc de Romagnecourt, who is become Mr. Verney's most intimate friend, discovered, that he had no inclination to go at this season into so remote a part of England—However, Mr. Verney determines to entertain him here in a style which may do honor to his hospitality; and as frequent dinners are to be given, and the Duke professes himself dissatisfied, even with the most luxurious table, where ladies do not preside, I have been compelled to quit my quiet lodging, and am to remain here till —— indeed, I know not till when, for Mr. Verney is as unsettled in his plans, even as my poor brother himself, and without the docility which Waverly has, who will generally allow some other person to decide for him, and then believes, for a few hours, that he has followed his own inclination.

All you say about Col. Scarfsdale is very true—It is impossible not to see, however I have endeavoured to misunderstand him; that his pretended friendship for Verney, does not prevent his forming designs, which you may assure yourself, excite only my contempt, and add abhorrence of his principles to personal aversion—I now see a great deal more of him than I do of Mr. Verney; for though we have apparently inhabited the same house these three days, we have met only once, even at table, and that was yesterday, when a magnificent dinner was given to his friends—Col. Scarfsdale, however, is very obligingly willing not to consign me to solitude; but, since he is always admitted by Mr. Verney's direction, and knows I am never out, he takes the opportunity of sauntering up to my dressing-room, where he plays with the children, picks up my thread-paper, insists upon bringing me new music, and on reading to me some novel

or

or poem, with which he is generally furnished—If coldness, and apparent disgust, could have put an end to attendance so improper, and so uneasy to me, it certainly would not have continued beyond the second morning, but to-day is the third, on which, in despite of myself, I shall probably be condemned to endure it—He affects extreme uneasiness at the state of Verney's affairs, (though, till lately, he has endeavoured to laugh off my solicitude about them, whenever I ventured to express it) and has given several intimations, that his friend has formed an attachment to some expensive woman—hints, that I determine never to understand—But, when I thus evade the subject I wish not to hear of, he sighs, walks about the room, and, as if unable to repress his emotions, cries, “I love Verney from my soul; but, in this instance, I cannot excuse him, though I pity him, for being so insensible of his own happiness!—I believe he is the only man in England who has so little taste.”

This,

This, they say, is such a common *finesse*, and has been used so often, that I rather wonder the Colonel, who piques himself on his peculiar talents in gallantry, has not recourse to some less hackneyed expedient—I must put an end to such sort of conversation, however, though I do not know how to do it; as my speaking to Verney, (if he did not laugh at it, as he probably would) might be attended with unpleasant consequences. To-morrow the whole party dine here again; and I have promised Mr. Verney to go to Ranelagh with them, and Miss Ayton, who is so good as to come to me whenever these engagements are made, that I may not be the only woman—Oh! my Fanny, would you were with me—Nothing could soothe my sufferings, as having you, to whom I might weep at night, when I have been compelled to conceal all day under affected tranquillity, the anguish of a breaking heart—I shall own to you, my dear sister, that notwithstanding the resolutions

tions I made at the beginning of my letter, to be patient and tranquil, there are moments, when I most sincerely wish that I and my babies were all dead together—What will become of us?—If, as I greatly fear, there will soon be nothing left but my settlement, between their father and utter ruin—If it ever does come to that, of which, from the hints dropped by Scarfdale, I expect every day to hear, I shall, if I have any such power, give it up to him, for I cannot bear his distress, while I have the means of relieving it—However, perhaps, it may not be so bad as Scarfdale, with some very unworthy view of his own, seems inclined to represent it—But, from him, I have heard of such losses at play upon the turf, and in bets of other sorts, that if only half of what he says be true, it is impossible this poor infatuated man can go on long—I need not say how greatly his expences are encreased by the present set of acquaintance he has got into—I have spoken of it

to him at the only moment I had an opportunity, and his answer was—"Pooh! don't give yourself any concern about that—I know what I am about, and shall take care to be no loser, but very much other-wise."—This, I suppose, meant, that he doubted not his success at play against the French noblemen, two of whom are men of very large fortune—But how degrading is such a scheme!—how unworthy of a man professing any honor or principle!—Enough, my Fanny, perhaps too much on this cruel topic—I will try to talk of other things.

I cannot help smiling at your account of my old acquaintance Miss Elford, whom I have heartily forgiven, not only for the stories she once sent forth about Mr. Mulgrave, which I never knew she had done till lately; but for the little air of triumph she assumes in relating, that "poor, dear Mrs. Verney is already altered in her appearance, though so young!"—Ah! it is very true, indeed, my love—I not only
forgive

forgive her, but am really very glad she is at length likely to enter happily into that state which has always been the great object of her laudable ambition—She will now, I trust, bear less enmity towards her young married friends, (how seldom, alas! the objects of well-founded envy) or towards those whose youth and charms seemed to give them a chance which she herself despaired of—I wish, however, she would not beset my mother with stories of Mr. Verney, which serve only to make her uneasy, without producing any benefit to us.

You say, that my mother certainly did not pay off those two debts that so sadly distressed us five months ago—Who then could it be?—Since I have been convinced it was none of my own family, I have been, I own, very solicitous to discover to whom such an obligation is owing; and in the indiscretion of my curiosity, I have applied to Col. Scarsdale, who, without directly asserting it, has given such answers, as would (if I did not believe him incapable

incapable of such an action, even from *interested* motives) have led me to imagine it might be himself—Surely this cannot be?—I wish it were possible to know.

You ask me, my Fanny, after Mr. Desmond—Alas! I know nothing satisfactory of him; and have sometimes been so anxious to hear of him, as to think of writing to Mr. Bethel—Yet a fear of its having a singular and improper appearance, has always deterred me. What is your secret, my dear sister, which you will not communicate, least it should add to my troubles?—Does it, as I guess, relate to Desmond?—Oh! how happy, how enviable, would the lot of that woman be, who, inspiring such a man with esteem and affection, should be at liberty to return it—Need I say, that it is the wish of my heart, my Fanny, might be that fortunate creature; yet, let me not assist in cherishing an hope that may serve only to embitter her life—I have heard it hinted, (but it is long since, and, perhaps, came from no very good authority)

thority) that he is already attached, with the most ardent affection, to that Madame de Boisselle, who so assiduously attended him in his illness; and that his continuing so long abroad, is owing to his unwillingness to leave her—I have collected this intelligence partly from Col. Scarsdale, who has some correspondence abroad, and partly from my servant Manwaring, whose husband is an old friend of Warham's, Mr. Desmond's servant, and now and then has a letter from him—Upon putting all the circumstances together, I am compelled to give that credit to their united evidence, which I should not have given to the Colonel alone, who seemed to triumph mightily in being able to relate, that my excellent and *virtuous* friend, as he sneeringly calls Desmond, is entangled in an adventure with a married woman—Perhaps, however, this is all the invention of malice, or the painting of ignorance—Malice, that will not allow it *probable* mere friendship should exist between two persons
of

of different sexes; and gross ignorance, that cannot imagine it possible—May heaven bless Desmond, whatever are his prospects and connexions! and may he be as happy as he deserves to be!—I feel, too sensibly, the weight of our obligation to him whenever his name is mentioned, whenever I think of him—Perhaps, I feel it the more, because (you only excepted) none of my family seem to feel it at all—My brother, I fear, never writes to him; and has probably committed follies as great, though not so irretrievable, as those from which Desmond delivered him.—Mr. Verney is continually making Desmond's quixotism the subject of his ridicule; (a talent which he manages generally so as to attract ridicule himself) and my mother seems rather sorry that Desmond is wiser than her son, than obliged to him for having exerted that wisdom in his behalf. How long, my dear Fanny, has your reading been under proscription?—We used to read what we would, when we were girls together,

ther, and I never found it was prejudicial to either of us; but my mother seems to have been listening (notwithstanding her dislike of women's knowledge) to some of those good ladies, who, by dint of a tolerable memory, and being accustomed to associate with men of letters, have collected some phrases and remarks, which they retail in less enlightened societies, and immediately obtain credit for an uncommon share of penetration and science—But if every work of fancy is to be prohibited in which a tale is told, or an example brought forward, by which some of these ladies suppose, that the errors of youth may be palliated, or the imagination awakened—I know no book of amusement that can escape their censure; and the whole phalanx of novels, from the two first of our classics, in that line of writing, Richardson and Fielding, to the less exceptionable, though certainly less attractive inventors of the present day, must be condemned with less mercy, than the curate and the
barber

barber shewed to the collection of the Knight of the forrowful Countenance; and then, I really know not what young people (I mean young women) will read at all—But let me ask these severe female censors, whether, in every well-written novel, *vice*, and even *weaknesses*, that deserve not quite so harsh a name, are not exhibited, as subjecting those who are examples of them, to remorse, regret, and punishment—And since circumstances, more inimical to innocence, are every day related, without any disguise, or with very little, in the public prints; since, in reading the world, a girl must see a thousand very ugly blots, which frequently pass without any censure at all—I own, I cannot imagine, that novel reading, can, as has been alledged, corrupt the imagination, or enervate the heart; at least, such a description of novels, as those which represent human life nearly as it is; for, as to others, those wild and absurd writings, that describe in inflated language, beings, that never were,

nor

nor ever will be, they can (if any young woman has so little patience and taste as to read them) no more contribute to form the character of her mind, than the grotesque figures of shepherdesses, on French fans and Bergamot boxes, can form her taste in dress—Who could, for a moment, feel any impression from the perusal of such stuff as this, though every diurnal print puffed its excellence, and every *petit maître* swore it was quite the thing—exquisite—pathetic—interesting.

“ The beautiful, the soft, the tender Iphigenia, closed not, during the tedious hours, her beautiful eyes, while the glorious flambeau of silver-flipperd day sunk beneath the encrimsoned couch of coral-crowned Thetis, giving up the dormant world to the raven-embrace of all o’erclouding night—When, however, the *matin* loving lark, or russet pinions, floating amid the tiffany clouds, that variegated, in fleecy undulation, the grey-invested heavens, hailed with his soul-reviving note,
the

the radiant countenance of returning morn;
the sweet, the mild, the elegantly unhappy maid, turned towards the roseate-streaming East, those sapphire messengers, that expressed, in language of such exquisite sensibility, every emotion of her delicate soul; and, with a palpitating sigh, arose—She clad her graceful form in a close jacket of Nakara satin, trimmed with silver, and the blossoms of the sweet-scented pea, intermixed; her petticoat was of white sattin, with a border of the same; and on her head, half hiding, and half discovering her hyacinthine locks, she carelessly bound a glowing wreath of African marygolds, and purple China-aster, surmounting the whole with a light kerchief of pink Italian gauze, embroidered by herself in lilies of the valley—She then approached the window, and in a voice, whose dulcet gurglings emulated the cooings of the enamoured pigeon of the woods, she sighed forth the following exquisitely expressive ode.”

Now

Now do you think, my dear Fanny, that either good or harm can be derived from such a book as this?—Loss of time may be, with justice, objected to it, but no other evil—A sensible girl would certainly throw it away in disgust: a weak one (who would probably not understand half of it, could it be understood at all) cries, “Dear!—how sweet!—charming creature!—A light kerchief of pink Italian gauze, embroidered with lilies of the valley!—Her voice, the dulcet gurglings of the enamoured pigeon of the woods!”—And then, meaning only to enquire, whether this amiable Iphigenia was happy or no?—She sits down to have her hair curled—reads as fast, as the roseate rays, and azure adventures, will let her, to the end, and forgetting them all—dresses herself and goes to Ranelagh, or the opera, where she tells some little cream-coloured beau what a dear, divine novel she has been reading; but of which, in fact, she has forgotten every word.

I own it has often struck me as a singular inconsistency, that, while novels have been condemned as being injurious to the interest of virtue, the play-house has been called the school of morality—The comedies of the last century are almost, without exception, so gross, that, with all the alterations they have received, they are very unfit for that part of the audience to whom novel reading is deemed pernicious, nor is the example to be derived from them very conducive to the interests of morality; for, not only the rake and the coquette of the piece are generally made happy, but those duties of life, to which novel-reading is believed to be prejudicial, are almost always violated with impunity, or rendered ridiculous by “the trick of the scene”—Age, which ought to be respected, is invariably exhibited, as hateful and contemptible—To cheat an old father, or laugh at a fat aunt, are the supreme merits of the heroes and heroines; and though
nothing

nothing is more out of nature than the old man of the stage—I cannot be of opinion, that the scene is a school of morality for youth, which teaches them, that age and infirmity, are subjects of laughter and ridicule—Such, however, is the taste of the English in their theatrical amusements—And now, when the very offensive jest is no longer admitted, portraits of folly, exaggerated till they lose all resemblance, harlequin tricks, and pantomimical escapes, are substituted to keep the audience awake, and are accepted in place of genuine wit, of which it must be owned, there is “a plentiful lack” (with some strong exceptions, however) in our modern comedy—All this is very well, if we take it as mere amusement; but, what I quarrel with, is the canting fallacy of calling the stage the school of morality—Roussseau says, very justly, “Il n’y a que la raison qui ne soit bonne a rien sur la scene*”—A reasonable

* It is reason only that is worth nothing on the stage.

man would be a character insupportably flat and insipid even on the French stage, and on the English, would not be endured to the end of the first scene—Even those charming pieces, which are called drames, such as *le Père de famille*, *l'Indigent*, *le Philosophe sans le scavoir*, would, however well they might be translated, adapted to our manners, and represented, lull an English audience to sleep, though they exhibit domestic scenes, by which morality and virtue are most forcibly inculcated; and such, as by coming “home to the business and bosoms” of the younger part of the audience, might be, indeed, lessons in that school, which our theatre certainly does not form; though the careful mothers, who dread the evil influence of novels, carry their daughters to its most exceptionable representations.

In regard to novels, I cannot help remarking another strange inconsistency, which is, that the great name of Richardson, (and great it certainly deserves to be)
makes,

makes, by a kind of hereditary prescriptive deference, those scenes, those descriptions, pass uncensured in Pamela and Clarissa, which are infinitely more improper for the perusal of young women, than any that can be found in the novels of the present day; of which, indeed, it may be said, that, if they do no good, they do no harm; and that there *is* a chance, that those who will read nothing, if they do not read novels, may collect from them some few ideas, that are not either fallacious, or absurd, to add to the very scanty stock which their usual insipidity of life has afforded them—As to myself, I read, you know, all sorts of books, and have done so ever since I was out of the nursery, for my mother had then no notion of restraining me—Novels, of course, and those very indifferent novels, were the first that I could obtain; and I ran through them with extreme avidity, often forgetting to practise my lesson on the harpsichord, or to learn my French task, while I got up into

my own room, and devoured with an eager appetite, the mawkish pages that told of damsels, most exquisitely beautiful, confined by a cruel father, and escaping to an heroic lover, while a wicked Lord laid in wait to tear her from him, and carried her to some remote castle—Those delighted me most that ended miserably; and having tortured me through the last volume with impossible distress, ended in the funeral of the heroine—Had the imagination of a young person been liable to be much affected by these sort of histories, mine would, probably, have taken a romantic turn, and at eighteen, when I was married, I should have hesitated whether I should obey my friends directions, or have waited till the hero appeared, who would have been imprinted on my mind, from some of the charming fabulous creatures, of whom I had read in novels.—But, far from doing so, I was, you see, “obedient—very obedient;” and, in the four years that have since past, I have thought only of being a
quiet

quiet wife, and a good nurse, and of fulfilling, as well as I can, the part which has been chosen for me—I know not how I have slid into all this egotism, from a defence of novel-reading—It has, however, served to detach my thoughts from subjects of “sad import;” and I have written myself into some degree of cheerfulness; before I relapse, therefore, I will bid you, my beloved Fanny, adieu!

GERALDINE VERNEY.

L E T T E R XIII:

T O M R. D E S M O N D.

Bath, May 17th, 1791.

IN pursuance of my promise, which, though it was, perhaps, indiscreet to give it, I hold sacred now that it is given; I write to you, my dear friend, to relate an history that cannot but wound you most cruelly, and add to that melancholy despondence too visible in your last letters—I believe I told you* that Geraldine was suddenly returned to London, at the request of her husband, and that his style of living at his house in Seymour-street, far from having been reduced by the late untoward circumstances that befel him there, was more extravagant and profuse than before—He was supposed to have won confi-

* In a letter which does not appear.

derable sums of money from the Duke de Romagnecourt, and some other Frenchmen of fortune, emigrants in England; and it was to do the honors of his house to these new friends, that his wife, who could no longer plead the excuse of ill health, was compelled, in obedience to his wishes, to leave her quiet retirement at Sheen, and return to witness follies she could not check, and to see the progress of ruin, it was impossible for her to prevent.

In my way through London, about three weeks ago, I called at her door, merely to make an enquiry after her, and not expecting to see her—The servant, however, whom I spoke to, informed me she had been some days in London, was then at home, and would, he believed, see me. I sent up my name, and, on entering the room, was gratified by the expression of pleasure, which I saw on the countenance of Geraldine, who, instead of receiving me with the formality of mere acquaintance, held out her hand to me, and called me her good friend.

The features of a gentleman, who was sitting with her, wore, I thought, a very different meaning—This was Colonel Scarf-dale, who looked at me as if he at once contemned me as a rural Squire, and disliked me as an unwelcome intruder—while the evident preference that Geraldine gave me by addressing all her conversation to me, and enquiring solicitously about you, seemed every moment to encrease his displeasure; still, however, he staid—now humming an air—and now making a violent noise with the little boy, for whom he affects the most extravagant fondness; and though I wished very much to have some conversation with Geraldine, in which, notwithstanding her reserve, I might have learned more of her real situation, than I can gather from public report—I found the Colonel determined to stay too; and that he was so much domesticated in the house, that he dressed there, and was, that day, to make one of a large party that were coming to dinner—As I was under the necessity

cessity of leaving London early the next morning, I had no opportunity of attempting another interview with her; but as soon as I arrived at Bath, I waited on her mother and her sister, and fortunately found the latter at home alone.

Fanny Waverly received me with great pleasure, and was not less early and eager in her enquiries after you, than Geraldine had been two days before—When I told her that you were, from your own account, so far recovered of your accident, that you talked of leaving off the sling in which your arm had been confined—her eyes sparkled with pleasure; but when I added, that you spoke less favourably of your general health, and had no thoughts of returning soon to England, she evidently drooped in dejection; and when I led the discourse towards Geraldine, as I immediately did, she dissolved in tears.

She told me, that the situation of her sister gave her the most cruel alarms; that Verney was most undoubtedly ruined be-

yond remedy ; and that she feared his real reason for having brought back Geraldine to his house, was, a hope of persuading her to give up her settlement, and enable him to sell his Yorkshire estate, which, said she, “ I have too much reason to believe my sister will consent to—Nor is this all my fear—Geraldine is young, and very lovely—Every man of intrigue, who sees such a woman neglected, or even worse treated by her husband, is ready to form designs for himself—I know there are, at this time, many such surrounding my sister; and though the purity of her heart, the excellence of her understanding, and her excessive tenderness for her children, are securities for her conduct, which I cannot a moment doubt; yet, I have such an opinion of Verney, that I am not certain he is not capable of the most infamous proceedings, even towards his wife, if, by such, he could obtain the means of supporting a little longer the wild career,
which

which his mad infatuation represents as the only one worthy of a man of fashion."

This remark added to what I had made in town on the behaviour of Colonel Scarf-dale, and my opinion of Verney, which is not at all better than that Fanny entertains of him, startled me extremely—"If such, my dear Miss Waverly," said I, "are your apprehensions for your sister, surely your mother, or your brother, ought to interfere, before they can be realized—Surely, they ought to rescue this excellent and lovely woman from the power of a husband, of whom such horrors can be suspected."—"Alas! Mr. Bethel," replied she, "how can I mention such dreadful ideas to my mother? who, conscious, I believe, that Geraldine was the victim of duty, and married only in compliance with her and my father's wishes, now endeavours to escape the conviction, that she has condemned her to the most dreadful of all destinies, and will not see or hear, if she can by any means escape it, what is, unhappily, too
evident

evident to the rest of the world—Wrapt up, as her whole soul has ever been in my brother, she has always thought, that in marrying her daughters, in what is called, a prudent way, that is, to men of large fortune, she had taken sufficient trouble about them ; she never considered whether there were any other sources of unhappiness than want of money ; nor did it ever occur to her, that in giving Geraldine to a man of fortune and family, she overlooked circumstances in the character of Verney, (though, when he married, his character was not developed) that might make her daughter liable to all the distresses and inconveniencies of poverty—To be convinced that it is so, is to be convinced, that she has wanted either judgment or tenderness, and she takes refuge in cards and company against the reproaches of her own heart—I have ventured, however, since I received some hints of the probability there was, that Geraldine should be persuaded to part with her settlement, to
implore

implore my mother's attention to a circumstance so destructive, but she impatiently answered, that I talked nonsense; for that the trustees to her marriage-articles, would take especial care to prevent her committing such a folly—As to any other fears I entertain, such as those I have just now mentioned, my mother would treat them as a romantic chimera of mine, and resent my supposing them probable or possible—How then I can venture to make representations to my mother, which would, probably, be ill received and fruitless? or which, were she to attend to them a moment, she would, perhaps, find some occasion to condemn as futile, because she would dislike to do that, which, if she allows them well founded, she ought to do—I mean, to take her daughter to her own house, as the only proper asylum, if she is compelled to quit that of her husband—This, however, I know my mother will avoid, for Geraldine will never leave her children, and my mother dislikes their noise, and
the

the trouble they occasion in an house ; and she is, in short, for why may I not speak the truth to you ? just at that period of life, when the character retains little that is feminine, but a love of trifles, and a redoubled attachment to some one weakness that has long been cherished—Such is her violent partiality to my brother, for whom (notwithstanding the little encouragement his entrance into the world has given to such hopes) she looks forward towards titles and dignities, which she imagines his fortune will command, and his merit deserve—There are some hearts, Mr. Bethel, that have not room for more than one strong affection—Such, I suppose, is my mother's—The rest of it, which her daughters might have occupied, is filled with trifling objects—and —— but I believe, you will think me very wrong,” continued she, “ and, perhaps, I have already said too much—I meant, however, to account to you for omitting to do, what certainly appears most rational under the
appre-

apprehensions I have ventured to express to you."

I was so much struck by the manner, as well as the purport of this answer—so concerned for the situation of Geraldine—and so affected by the tender interest her sister thus expressed, that I could neither find words, immediately to do justice to my feelings, nor, in my mind, any remedy, for the unhappy circumstances that excited them—Your charge, my dear Desmond, to use your fortune without scruple, in the service of Geraldine, cannot here be executed; for to her, it would be worse than useless, while her husband would derive from it the means of continuing his career of vice and folly, yet something should be done, and done immediately, to save her sensible heart from the anguish it must endure for her children—to spare her the mortification and misery she must feel in seeing herself at the mercy of a wretch, who is believed capable of such actions as Fanny Waverly, I fear with too much reason,

son,

fon, represents him as likely to practise. As I wished to have time to reflect on what measures were the most proper, since of her own family there seemed so little to hope, I took leave of Miss Waverly, and returned to my lodgings; but my thoughts dwelt in vain on the subject—I saw no way in which it was proper, or even possible, for the most disinterested friendship to interfere between a man and his wife—If Verney is determined to ruin himself and her, I see not by what means it can be prevented, or on what pretence, even her own family, can separate them, while he chuses she should remain the victim of his dissipation, or hopes to derive, from the admiration she excites, the power of continuing it; for to such a plan Fanny Waverly undoubtedly alluded; and I have since heard, that Scarfsdale, who has been long trying to recommend himself to the favor of Geraldine in vain, has found it much easier to embarrass her husband's affairs so much, as to have a prospect of obtaining

obtaining that influence over her, from necessity, which, from any other motive he could never obtain—But, I think, if I know any thing of the spirit and temper of that incomparable woman; she will spurn, with detestation, a monster, who pursues the gratification of his passions by perfidy so atrocious—There was a time, when new to the world, and unhackneyed in the ways of men, I should have felt indignation at the mere representation of such characters as those of Verney and Scarsdale, and should have thought it a misanthropic libel on human nature—But, alas! I know that such men do exist; and I know that it is very difficult to save Geraldine from them, if they unite in destroying her peace and her reputation—I here break off, to keep an appointment I have made with Fanny Waverly, to meet at a book-feller's shop, and walk together—You will smile, or rather, you would smile at any other time, in figuring to yourself, your sage Mentor, making an assignation with a
sprightly

sprightly girl of nineteen or twenty—But this is the only way, by which I can obtain an opportunity of talking with her alone—And I am one of the favored few, whom her discreet mother allows to converse with her—Louisa, who is a great favorite, and who loves Miss Waverly extremely, is, however, to make a third in our party.

May 18th, 1791.

Well ! my friend—I am returned from my *tête-à-tête* with this young beauty, and with an aching heart, but aching from other motives than those of love—The week that has elapsed since I last conversed with her about Geraldine, has produced some of the events she then expected, and others, of which she had no apprehension.

Waverly, your travelling companion, is suddenly returned to England, while his mother and his sister thought him at Venice, with a nymph whom he had brought from the Isle of Cyprus, whither he went with some other young Englishmen—

Some

Some misadventure, by which he lost the lady, disgusted him with their society, and meeting at Genoa, with a Captain of a merchantman, just coming to England, he embarked, after half-an-hour's debate, with only one of his servants, leaving the others with his baggage to follow ; and having a very quick passage, he landed near London ; and in fourteen hours arrived at Bath, to the extreme satisfaction of his mother, who received him, as if the whole time of his absence had been passed in refining his manners, and cultivating his understanding—I believe (though Fanny does not say so) that there is no very visible improvement in either ; but that he has picked up, at every place, some small specimen of the reigning follies, without having dropped those that he had acquired before he set out—But his mother, who believes he has completed the course of study and education which is requisite to a man of fortune, and “ of a certain style,” is now most eagerly solicitous to have him
married ;

married; and Fanny tells me, that, from every appearance, at present, it is highly probable, that, by the mutual endeavours of the two elder ladies, Mrs. Fairfax and Mrs. Waverly, this great event may be accomplished—The eldest Miss Fairfax (your fair aristocrate, at Margate) is the lady whose happy destiny it will be, to fix this fluctuating lover.

This is a matter of importance no otherwise, than, as it occupies entirely the maternal feelings of Mrs. Waverly, and prevents her giving any attention to the situation of her daughter Verney, and will as certainly be a reason against her affording her, even that pecuniary assistance, which I greatly fear she may now want, for the catastrophe of Verney's affairs, so long foreseen, is at length arrived—The sudden increase of expence which he rushed into in London, ended in his giving up the lease of the house, and all its furniture, to his creditors; and it is advertised for sale on the 30th instant—Geraldine, and her children,

children, have, of course, left it ; but not to go to Moorsly Park, which is made over for a term of years, with the furniture, and stock, to Colonel Scarfsdale, as is said, towards the discharge of a considerable debt, of what is called honor—Verney himself, who seems totally insensible to the sufferings of his wife, and has left her to struggle against them alone, is either gone, or going to Germany with the Duke de Romagnecourt, and his party, who are about to join the exiled French Princes—Fanny Waverly told me, with many tears, that her sister was gone into a small lodging at Kensington, for those at Sheen, humble as they once appeared, she now thought too expensive for her ; that she did not intend to remain so near London, but to find some cheap retirement in a distant country, where she might conceal her sorrows from those, to whom the sight of them would be oppressive.—Thus, my dear Desmond, I have executed the most uneasy task I ever undertook, that of relating
ing

ing the calamities that seem likely to overwhelm our charming friend—Be not, however, in pain about her immediate situation, as to money—I have settled with Fanny Waverly the means of being, for the present, her banker, without her knowing that any but her own family execute this office—And I have entreated this amiable girl to endeavour to obtain leave of her mother to go to her sister in this hour of bitter distress—This, however, is a permission that Fanny has already solicited in vain; nor can she obtain of Mrs. Waverly any other attention to the cruel situation of Geraldine, than what the old lady thinks necessary, to prevent the circumstances she is under, from bringing any sort of disgrace on the rest of the family, and injuring her present projects, in regard to her son, which are alone near her heart.

I direct this to St. Germain's, where your last letter tells me you will, by this time, be arrived, to remain some time, I cannot imagine why, and do not ask, as if

you had chosen I should know, you would probably have told me—However, my business is to forward this letter to you, by as quick a conveyance as possible—I luckily have an opportunity of doing so, by a servant belonging to an acquaintance of mine, who is going to rejoin his master at Paris. I shall be impatient to hear from you—Let me soon have that satisfaction ; and let me hear that the despondence is gone, which, at your age, and with your character, is a weakness you ought not to indulge.—Adieu !

Most faithfully your's,

E. BETHEL.

L E T T E R X I V .

T O M I S S W A V E R L Y .

May 26th, 1791.

“ A T length, my Fanny, I begin to recover—It is now three days since I have been settled at my new abode, and returning tranquillity—I mean outward tranquillity, (for that of the heart and spirit can never more be mine) gives me a little time to collect my troubled thoughts—

“ And on the heat and flame of my endurance,
Sprinkle cool patience.*”

But be not uneasy about me—I am not ill—I am only languid from the severity of my past sufferings, and that languor is every day decreasing.

My two eldest children are quite well ;
and my little George is as gaily playing on

* Shakespeare.

the turf here, as he used to be on that of the lawn at Linwell, or the park at Moorefly—places, of which I once hoped, he would be the inheritor—But, of my disappointed hopes, my lovely boy is unconscious!—yet he continually brings tears into my eyes, by asking, why we came hither?—what is become of his papa, of the servants, and the horses, whose names they had taught him, and of the maid who used to wait upon me?—I endeavour to divert these infantine enquiries as much as I can, for they affect me more than even my own melancholy reflections—Fortunately it is a season when he is easily amused—I send him out with his sister and his maid into the surrounding meadows, where, after their maid has dressed their hats with cowslips, orchisses, cuckoo-flowers, and golden-cups—my Harriet brings home her lap full of these “gay children of the May,” and, in her imperfect language, says, they are for “dear mama.”

While my little prattlers are absent, I hang over the cradle of my infant William, whose health has again been sadly disordered by all the anxiety I have endured ; yet, for his sake, I endeavoured to repress those acute feelings with which my heart was torn in pieces ; but such were their nature, that it was impossible my health should not be affected, and, of course, that of the child, who, under such circumstances, I have, perhaps, done wrong to continue nourishing at my breast, especially as I think he has never recovered the first shock he received, when, at his birth, I first knew so much, and so suddenly, of the disarranged state of Mr. Verney's circumstances—Compared with the loss of my child, every other evil would be as nothing ; yet, perhaps, I ought not to wish him to live, since to live is but to suffer.—But again, my dear sister, I check these mournful thoughts, with which I ought not to oppress you ; and again, I assure you,

you, that when none of these apprehensions assail my heart, I am not so unhappy as you say you fear I am—If I obtain resolution enough to look calmly at the change which has befallen me, I see much less to regret than most people would discover—The only pleasure I have lost in losing high affluence, is that of having the power to befriend the unhappy, to whom I can now give only my tears; but, for the rest, what have I lost, that I ought to lament?—The turbulent and joyless societies which Mr. Verney loved, were to me only fatiguing and disagreeable—The parties of fashionable men that he continually collected, offered me neither rational conversation, nor permanent friendship—and the women, with whom I was, in consequence of these connections, compelled to associate, were so insipid, or so vain; so devoted to the card-table, or occupied by the rage of being admired, that their acquaintance gave me as little pleasure as mine seemed to give them; and our

intercourse was, after two or three formal dinners, reduced to the slight civility of sending cards to each other four or five times in a winter. The fineries in which Mr. Verney's vanity dressed me out, (he called it love, I think, for a little time) never gave me a moment's pleasure; and when last year, Colonel Scarfdale persuaded him, that I ought to be presented, and appear sometimes at court, I was perfectly convinced that such ceremonies were for me the heaviest punishments that could be devised; and, indeed, few of those whose pride or interest made their attendance on them more frequent, were apparently more delighted than I was, for they seemed universally to feel under all the apparent gaiety and splendor the influence of the *Dæmon ennui*—

“ That realm he rules, and in superb attire,
Visits each earthly palace.*”

Now, I believe, my Fanny, I am for ever exempt from being a visitor where

* Hayley.

this hideous phantom holds his eternal reign; and he will not, I trust, seek me in the farm house I now inhabit, and which I am going to describe to you.

The situation of it is charming—It stands on a rising ground among meadows, of which poetry, in the most flowery language, could hardly exaggerate the beauty—Through these yellow meads, the Wye takes its “sinuous course,” till its progress is concealed by projecting hills, or rather mountains, rising beyond the meadows; their summits bare and rocky, their sides cloathed with woods, which, at this time, exhibit every varied tint of vivid and early vegetation—Forgive me, if I borrow here the aid of a poet, whose powerful pen, with more than the magic of the pencil, brings whatever he describes immediately before the eye.

“ No tree in all the grove but has its charms,
Tho’ each its hue peculiar ; paler some,
And of a wannish grey, the willow such ;
And poplar, that with silver lines his leaf ;

And ash, far stretching his umbrageous arm ;
 Of deeper green the elm ; and deeper still,
 Lord of the woods, the long-surviving oak ;
 Some glossy-leaved and fluting in the sun,
 The maple, and the beech of oily nuts
 Prolific ; and the lime at dewy eve
 Diffusing odours.*”

Beneath these varied woods are a tract of
 orchards, now covered with bloom, giving
 completely the idea of the

“ *Primavera candida e vermiglia.*†”

A cottage or two, almost embosomed
 among the trees, are marked rather by the
 smoke arising from their chimneys, than
 by their concealed thatch ; but thus dimly
 seen, they give cheerfulness to the land-
 scape—Behind the house, the country
 wears quite another aspect—It rises abruptly
 into small knolls, too steep for the
 ploughs, and, from the nature of the soil,
 not much worth cultivation ; since it is in

* Cowper.

† Petrarch.

the lower part a black moor, and the hillocks are of yellow sand, producing little but the heath and the whortle-berry*—The higher ridges, furze, or thorns, with here and there, in the hollows, tufts of self-planted oaks.

From this rude tract of country, the garden of this house is divided, in some parts, by an old wall, in others, by a thick hedge of yew and holly, the growth of centuries; for this is an old manorial residence; and besides the long row of firs, of very ancient date, that shade part of the garden, has many marks of having been once the abode of opulent possessors, who ornamented it in the taste of the days in which they lived. The last improvements in the house appear to have been made in the time of Elizabeth and James the First; but those in the garden are rather, perhaps, in the style that was imported from Holland by William, when he was sent for to secure the liberty

* Whortle-berry, or hurts. *Vaccinium Myrtillus*.

of Englishmen, and teach them to curtail that of their trees—I mean the taste which decorated our gardens with rows of evergreens, formally planted, and cut into the imagined shapes of men, peacocks, and sundry other forms—

“ Gorgons and Hydras, and Chimeras dire.”

The last inhabitant of the house, was an old and rich farmer, who had no relish for these monuments of former elegance ; but the wife of him who now rents it, and of whom I hire my apartments, told me, with great exultation, that *she* had caused one of the men, at his leisure hours, to clip them into their former beauty, and “ make them fit to be seen, all’s one, as folks say, they used to be in the old Squire’s time.”—But, as this rustic sculptor of vegetables is not very expert in his art, the box, the holly, and the yew, have lost all resemblance to themselves, without finding any other—In the borders beneath them, however, there are a great many flowers, whose roots
have

have survived those who planted them, and these are even scattered over the rough parts of the enclosure, which is given up to the culinary productions, or left wholly uncultivated

“ Along the waste, where once the garden smiled,
And where still many a garden flower grows wild.*”

And it is among these, which are now peeping through the grass, or blooming, unseen, among the thyme, balm, and lavender, that I, in my melancholy meditations, repeat

“ The tender rose which seems in winter dead,
Revives in Spring, and lifts its dewy head :
But we—the great, the glorious, and the wise !
When once the hand of death has clos’d our eyes—†”

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Or rather, the lighter comment of a very agreeable French authoress on this text, which concludes with

“ Mais hélas !—pour vouloir revivre,
La vie est il un bien si doux ?

* Goldsmith.

† Idyllium of Moschus on the death of Bion.

Quand nous l'aimons tant, fongons nous
 De combien de chagrins, sa perte nous delivre ?
 Elle n'est qu'un amas de craintes, de douleurs,
 De travaux, de soucis, de peines.
 Pour qui connoit les miseres humaines ;
 Mourir n'est pas le plus grands des malheurs.†”

But I am getting again into reflections, which I blame myself for indulging, and moralizing, when I undertook to give you a picture of my abode.

The house itself is very old ; wide, projecting casements, divided by heavy stone work, a great brick hall, and

“ Passages that lead to nothing.”

May give you some idea, and perhaps a dreary idea of the sort of house.—The farmer, and his family, inhabit the northern end of it, which was once the servants apartments, kitchen, and buttery—The rooms, however, which I have taken, are not so forlorn, as from the general air of the house you would suppose—I have a

† Les fleurs, Idylle par Madame des-Houlières.

parlour wainscotted and carpetted—The chimney, indeed, is very large, but, at this time of the year, is

“ With flowers and fennel gay,*”

And will, I dare say, look very well with a blazing wood fire in it—Above, I have a very good bed-chamber for myself, and one, still better, immediately adjoining, for my children; these are papered, and though not in a very modern style, perhaps, they are clean, and warm—I have desired some great, old, family pictures, with which both these and the parlour were disfigured, might be removed, and I shall supply the places of these heroes, who bled in the civil wars, (as I guess, by their wigs and their armour) and the dames, whose simpering charms rewarded their prowess, but whose very names are now forgotten, (sad lesson to human vanity!) with rude brackets of wood, on which I shall put

* Goldsmith.

flowers, and between them shelves for the books I have brought with me—These little arrangements serve to occupy my mind ; and I forget the conveniencies and luxuries of which I am deprived, in contriving how I may still obtain those few, which (perhaps, from singularity of taste) are more necessary to my content, than the side-board of plate, the elegant furniture, and handsome carriages, I have parted with.

I think more of their late thoughtless owner, poor Verney ! yet why do I speak of him in a tone of pity, when he is, probably, much happier than I am ?—I have had no other letter from him since our hasty parting in London, than that, wherein he very briefly assented to my proposed retirement ; and said, though not in direct terms, that if I did not embarrass him about money, I was at liberty to do with myself and my children whatever I thought good—I will not comment on this—I will endeavour not to think of it—I turn always
with

with painful pleasures, to *some other* subjects ; but to *one* I think with pleasure only. I am happy to hear Mr. Bethel is at Bath, that you have such long and pleasant conversations with him, and that his charming girl is so much with you—He is a man whom I have always regarded and esteemed for his own sake, as well as because he was so excellent a guardian, and is so warm a friend to Mr. Desmond.—You hear that Desmond is at St. Germain's, that place is, I suppose, the residence of Madame de Boisbelle, when she is not with her brother.—But Mr. Bethel tells you that Desmond is quite restored to health, and only occasionally wears his arm in a sling—may he soon lose even that recollection of his painful adventure !—I must now, my Fanny, bid you adieu ! my letter is very long, yet I have written it all while my little William has been sleeping, and my other charmers walking with their maid in the shade of one of the woods, which a rustic bridge thrown across the river, puts within our reach—

It

It is now near their hour of dinner, and I see them from my window crossing the meadow ; I go to meet them, and help to bring them home, as I see, by his actions, that George complains of being tired, and solicits his Peggy to carry him as well as his sister. I will seal my letter on my return, as it cannot go to the post till to-morrow.

May 29th, Nine at Night.

I did not imagine, my Fanny, in leaving my letter unsealed this morning, that I should have to add to its contents, the history of a circumstance that has surprised me a good deal.

On my meeting my children in the field below the house, their maid told me, that Master George had tired himself so by playing with a gentleman whom they had met, and with a great dog he had with him, that she could hardly get him home. I enquired who the gentleman was ? and heard, that they had seen him reading in the wood, and that the dog, which was a large water-spaniel, having ran towards
the

the children, and somewhat alarmed the little girl, his master, who was, as Peggy described him, “one of the most handsome gentlemen she ever set eyes upon,” had come up to them, and asked very eagerly, whose children they were; and hearing that their names were Verney, he had taken them both up and kissed them—That the little boy looked earnestly at him, and then returned his fondness; and that once, in playing with him, the gentleman, called him George, as if he had known him before—I desired the maid to describe the figure of this gentleman, that I might know if it were any of my acquaintance—She said, “that he was a tall, and, (according to her phrase) quite a *grand looking man*, though not *lusty*, but rather *thinnish*; he had dark eyes, brighter than any diamonds, and brown hair; but that he looked a little pale, as if he was sick; and though he seemed in his way somehow like an officer, that he was left-handed.”—Till now, I had formed, I own, a vague, and yet

yet a very uneasy idea, that this stranger, who knew the name of my little boy so well, might be Colonel Scarfsdale; but this description did not at all answer his person; and then I recollected, that if it had been him, George would have known him, and indeed the maid also, who has been so lately accustomed to see him every day—I then supposed it might be some of the neighbouring gentlemen, and bade Peggy describe him to the farmer's wife and servants, which she has just done, and tells me that there is no such person in this country that they know of, and that the nearest gentleman's seat is above seven miles off—I have again been questioning Peggy, as this stranger's having so much noticed the children, has made a great impression on my mind—She says, she is sure, from his manner, that it is some gentleman who had been acquainted in the family, because he seemed so fond of them, and “somehow glad to see them,” and that he asked George if he often

often walked in that wood, and whether his mama ever walked there?—"And to be sure, Ma'am," remarks Peggy, "it must be somebody that knows you, or how should he enquire after the children's mama, for I never told him whether they had a mama or a papa, or who belonging to them."

The more questions I ask, the more I wish to know who this is, and whether it is really any man whom I have formerly known who happens accidentally to be in this country?—If it is, he will, probably, since he knows where I am, call upon me; and if it is not, of what importance is the circumstance at all?—Thus I have endeavoured to reason myself out of the restless curiosity that has disturbed me, perhaps, foolishly enough the whole of the remaining day—It is now night—a calm, a lovely night, without a moon indeed, but with the canopy of heaven illuminated with countless myriads of "planetary fires"—Such a night, my Fanny, as some
of

of those in which we used, during the first year of my marriage, to be induced by Desmond to wander in the coppice-walks and shrubberies, that furrounded the lawn at Linwell—Alone, as I am here, I must not venture so far from the house; but I may traverse the grass-plat before it, and listen to the nightingales, of which numbers salute me every evening with their song from the opposite woods; their delicious notes, softened and prolonged by the echos from the bridge and the water; one only one, seems to have taken up his lonely abode in the garden here—Alas! I could be romantic enough to fancy it the spirit of some solitary and deserted being like myself, that comes sympathetically to hear and soothe my sorrows.

Let me tell them then to this visionary visitant, rather than to my Fanny; and now, in wishing her a good night, wish too, that her slumbers may bring to her mind, without disturbing it, the image of, her

GERALDINE.

L E T-

L E T T E R X V.

T O M I S S W A V E R L Y.

6th June, 1791.

THE opportunities I have of sending to the post are so few, my dear sister, that though I write whenever I have any thing to say, which I imagine you wish to hear, or whenever it relieves my heavy heart, to pour out its sorrows to you, yet I know my letters do not reach you regularly, and I have, from the same cause, the mortification of waiting some days for your's, after they arrive at the post-office of the neighbouring town.

You may, perhaps, be anxious to know if I have again heard of the stranger, whose notice of my children seemed so extraordinary, and I own, for the following day or two, gave me some uneasiness—He was probably, however, only a traveller of
taste,

taste, invited by the beauty of this part of the country at this season, to make an abode of a day or two at some little neighbouring public-house, or cottage, a circumstance which, my landlord here, tells me, is not unfrequent—It was, perhaps, the loveliness of my little ones that attracted his attention, and not any previous acquaintance with their family ; and for the familiarity with which he seemed to treat them, much of it possibly in the mere fancy of Peggy, who, though a very good girl, is as likely as any other, to add to a story she tells from a natural love of the marvellous.—I say thus much about this adventure, least what I told you in my last letter should raise any uneasy ideas in your mind ; for I know you have a hundred fancies about Colonel Scarfsdale, and suppose that he is a sort of modern Lovelace ; but, believe me, my Fanny, that character does not exist now ; there is no modern man of fashion, who would take a hundredth part of the trouble that Richardson makes Lovelace

lace

lace take, to obtain Helen herself, if she were to return to earth—And Scarsdale is a man so devoted to the acquisition of fame in his own style of life, that with *my* change of fortune, *his* pursuit ends—It would have added something to the glories he already boasts in the annals of gallantry, if he could have carried off Verney's wife from her husband, her children, and her fame; but now that she is banished from the circles where she was talked of and followed—now, that she is forgotten by the idle flutterers who surrounded her for a few months; she is too humble, and too inconsiderable, to be any object to such a man, and is, she thanks heaven, sheltered by her obscurity from his insolent pretensions.

I have little more to say to-day, but that my precious William is better, and my apprehensions about him subside again—I impatiently wait to hear how my brother's love affair proceeds, though, in my last letter, I omitted to mention his name, engaged,

ged, as I was, by the multiplicity of trifles ; but this is not owing to any indifference about him—I love my brother, and should rejoice in his being happily married, though he seems to have forgotten that he has a sister, whose comfortless destiny should, at least, secure to her the common civilities of life from her own family, if they cannot spare her any share of their affections—Alas ! how easily do common minds make to themselves excuses for forsaking and forgetting the unhappy—Were I again to appear (which heaven forbid) in those societies, whose members now think me sunk below them—what insulting pity !—what contemptuous condolences I should receive !—In proportion as I was once thought the object of envy, should I now be that of ill concealed triumph, and malignant scorn, under the semblance of sympathy and concern—When these thoughts arise, you cannot imagine how well pleased I am that I am here—

“ Are

———“Are not these woods
More free from peril than the envious court ?*”

And, as I hide myself in them, I regret nothing but your company, my sister, and yet, I ought not to wish you with me, when you are where the young and happy ought to be, amid that world which has, at your age, and with your unblighted prospects, so many charms.

Farewell, for the present—it is a delicious evening, and I will now venture to walk out and enjoy it—How forcibly every such scene brings to my mind our morning walks, our evening rambles in Kent, and the pleasant little trios we used to make with Mr. Desmond, who has so much taste, and so much genuine enthusiasm—I wonder whether he is as much gratified by the charms of Spring at St. Germain's, as he used to be in England ? I should rather fear not ; at least, that he is less likely there to find companions who understand

* Shakespeare.

him, and can participate his pleasure; for the French ladies in general have, I believe, very little notion of that species of delight, that arises from contemplating the simple beauties of nature—A few days will soon make it a twelvemonth since I saw Desmond, and of that time, he has sacrificed more than half to his disinterested friendship to my brother—But I have repeated this so often to myself, that, perhaps, I have as often obtruded it upon your recollection.

I have found in the opposite woods one of the most singular, and most beautiful spots that I ever saw—It is a little hill, or rather three or four hills that seem piled together, though the inequality of their forms is concealed and adorned by the variety of trees with which they are covered; many of these are ever-greens, such as holly and yew; and just where their shade is the darkest, they suddenly recede, and, from a stoney excavation, bursts forth a strong and rapid stream of pure and brilliant water, which pours directly

rectly down the precipice, and is lost in the trees that croud over it—A few paces higher up from a bare projection of rock, darts forth another current equally limpid, and having made itself a little bason, which it fills, it hastens over the rugged stones, that are thus worn by its course, and dashing down the hill for some time in a different direction, meets the former stream; united, they make a considerable brook, and hasten to join the Wye; not, however, till two or three other little wandering currents, that arise still nearer the summit of this rocky eminence, which seems to abound in springs, have found their way to the same course—Of these unexpected gushes of water, you hear the murmurs often without seeing from whence they arise; so thickly is the wood interwoven over the whole surface of the wild hill; a narrow, and hardly visible path, however, winds around it, quite to its summit, which is less cloathed than the rest, and where, on two roots, that the

hand of time, rather than the art of man, has twisted into a sort of grotesque, rustic chair, I sit—and listening to the soothing sounds of the water, as it either steals or rushes beneath—I can see through the boughs great part of the farm-house I inhabit, and nearer, the grey smoke of cottages without the wood, curling among the mingled foliage—It is, my dear sister, in this sequestered nook, that I am going to wander, and to think of you as the most pleasing contemplation, in which I can indulge myself; once more, then, a good night.

Gracious heaven!—Am I in the delirium of one of those feverish visions, which, with undecribable sensations of pain, pleasure, and wonder, reconcile, for a moment, impossibilities, or am I really awake?—I have seen him.—Desmond, whom I believed to be in France!—Whom I had not the least idea of meeting in this remote country!—whom I even doubted, whether I should ever see again! That I might say,
how

how truly sensible I was of the debt of gratitude I owed him!—But I will try to recollect myself enough to relate, instead of exclaiming!—Yesterday evening, I had finished, as I believed, my letter to you, and had seen my children put to bed—It was not yet eight o'clock, and the sun, though sunk beneath the opposite hills, tinged the whole landscape with that rosy light, which it is impossible to describe—I did not take a book with me, as I usually do, when I walk alone, because it was so late, that I meant, instead of sauntering, as I love to do, to take my walk and return; however, when I reached the wood, I was tempted, by the perfect tranquillity of every thing around me—the fragrant scents that floated in the air—the soothing song of innumerable birds, and the low murmurs of the water, to gratify myself with a view of my favourite little hill, which I had never yet seen in an evening—I reached the top; when, stretched on the ground, his head resting on his arm, (from

which a book seemed to have fallen) as it hung over the branch of the rude chair I before described to you, I saw a gentleman, who appeared to be sleeping—I had no idea of his face, for his hat and his hair concealed it, nor did I stay to see if I recollected his figure, but concluding that this was the same person who had been met by the children, I was returning very hastily from an impulse that had more of fear in it, than his general appearance ought to have raised; when his dog, which lay by him, ran forward towards me; at the same moment, the gentleman raised his head—I saw Desmond leap from the ground, and, though in as much confusion as I was, he instantly approached me—“Mrs. Verney!” was all he said, and even to that I had nothing, for a moment, to reply—till he added—“I am afraid I have alarmed you”—“You have indeed,” answered I—“for to meet any one here, was very unexpected—to meet you!”—I did not know what I would say—but he seemed

now

now to have recovered himself, and finished the sentence for me—"was more unexpected still?"—"It was indeed, for I thought you were in France."

He gave no answer to this, nor did he account for his being in a part of the country, where I don't remember to have heard he had any acquaintance or connexions, but simply begging of me to forgive the momentary alarm he had involuntarily been the occasion of, he said, "since I *have* had, however unexpectedly, the happiness of meeting you, Madam, will you allow me to have the honor of attending you to your home?"—I hesitated—I know not why, and then said, "certainly"—We began slowly to descend the winding and steep path, which is crossed by roots, and interrupted by pieces of rocks—It was now, from the lateness of the hour, also obscure; and he, of course, offered me his arm, which I accepted indeed, but not with that easy confidence I used to have in our early rambles, three years ago—It was now,

that I first observed a black cr pe round his neck, in which he slung his right arm, while he assisted me to descend with his left—I shuddered, but I could make no remark on that circumstance—He seemed no more disposed to converse than I was, and we were silent till we reached the orchard, surrounding a cottage, through which the path leads, by a stile through the meadows, and over the bridge—He seemed to know the way, as if he had been long accustomed to it—I then disengaged my arm, and he went first, but, in reaching the other side of the stile, my foot slipped, and I should have fallen, but Desmond, who had advanced three or four steps, flew back and caught me—He trembled so, that it was impossible to help remarking it—I feared, that, in endeavouring to save me, he had hurt his arm; and I almost, involuntarily, expressed my apprehensions—He assured me he had not received the slightest injury, and again offered me his left arm, on which I again leant,
and

and with very little conversation, and that little consisting of broken and incoherent sentences, we, at length, reached the house.

There were candles in my little parlour, and the table was prepared for my simple supper; I asked him, of course, to partake of it, he replied, in a low voice, that he seldom supped at all, but could not refuse to sit down—Peggy came in to wait, and he placed himself opposite to me.

It was then, and not till then, my Fanny, that I observed the extraordinary alteration in the countenance of Desmond; he has lost all that look of health and vivacity which we used to remark—pale, thin, almost to emaciation; his eyes still radiant indeed, but expressing dejection; or if they, for a moment, assumed any other look, it was that of anxiety—He spoke sometimes very low, at others, with that sort of quickness, which is observable, when people wish to end embarrassing conversation—And when I mentioned his wan-

derings, or his friends in France, (which I at length collected courage to do) he gave me slight answers, and changed the conversation as soon as possible.

As this evasion of every topic that led him to speak of his foreign connexions, was every moment more striking, the cause of it, at length, occurred to me—I trust I am not suspicious, or inquisitive; and certainly am neither desirous of prying into the actions of my friends, nor disposed to blame those of Desmond, to whom I owe so much; but I have now no doubt, that this reserve arises from his having been accompanied to England by Madame de Boisselle; and having taken, in this neighbourhood, some residence for her, on account of its being so retired—If this is the case, he was probably hurt and distressed in meeting here, one of his acquaintance; and it accounts at once for his manner, which, though I cannot well describe it, appears very extraordinary.

This

This idea no sooner struck me, than I felt hurt at the pain I thus unintentionally had given him, and particularly at having asked him, as I had done some minutes before, and merely for something to say, how long he proposed staying in this part of England? an enquiry which he answered, after some hesitation, by saying, it was uncertain.

As I now dreaded that every question, however apparently inconsequential, might lead him to suppose me impertinently curious, we both sat silent, and I believe, he was meditating how to put an end to an interview, which was, perhaps at once, tedious and distressing to him; yet, I observed, when I dared observe his countenance, that he looked at me with eyes full of concern and pity, which I impute to the goodness of his nature—He felt sorry to see me in a situation so different from that which I was placed in, when our acquaintance began—An acquaintance, that I cannot endure to think, has been productive to him only of personal and mental uneasiness.

At length, after an hour and a half, the only time of my life that I ever passed in Desmond's company unpleasantly, he arose to go, and with a solemnity, that yet had more dejection than formality in it, he said he must wish me a good night—I was on the point of asking him a very natural question, “If he had far to go home?” but I checked myself, and did not encrease, by any question, the embarrassment he seemed to be under, when, hesitating and faltering, he said, “May I be permitted, Madam, to pay my respects to you once more before I — May I be allowed the honor of waiting on you once again?”—I had surely no pretence to refuse this—He knows I am never engaged; and he knows that I am, or ought to be, more obliged to him than to any other human being—I could not, assuredly, therefore decline or evade, what I, however, wished he had not asked; as I not only see him so changed, as he is, both in appearance and in spirits, with concern; but fear, from
his

his deportment, that the attention which he, perhaps, thinks himself under the necessity of shewing me, may put him into difficulties with the lady to whom he has attached himself—I have other uneasy sensations about it ; but, however, I could only say, in answer to the permission he requested, that I should always be glad of Mr. Desmond's company, whenever he would so far honor me—He sighed, and thanked me ; but added, “ I shall not, Madam, intrude much on your indulgence, for in a very few days ” —— he hesitated again, and I could not help repeating, “ in a few days ? Do you leave the neighbourhood in a few days ? ” —— “ I believe so,” said he——“ Yes ! I believe I *must* go within a few days ; will you then suffer me to call to-morrow ? and may I be gratified with a sight of your children ? ”——I said, “ yes,” and then, without naming the hour at which he would call, he left me.

Thus, my Fanny, ended this very extraordinary interview, for extraordinary it

cer-

certainly is.—I know not from whence Mr. Desmond last came, or whither he is going—I know not where he has taken up his present abode—I could not, however, forbear marking from my window the way he took when he left me; and, as long as I could discern his figure through the obscurity of the night, he seemed to return through the fields, and over the bridge, the same road as he came with me—I left the window—(from whence, I hope, there was nothing wrong in my thus observing him) I left it, only to retire to my pillow and my tears; which flowed more than usual this evening, yet I know not why; unless the suddenly meeting an acquaintance, a friend, who has certainly a great claim to my gratitude and good wishes, had more than usually fatigued my spirits, for, as to the rest, why should I be thus agitated by a circumstance in which I have no immediate interest?—Whether Mr. Desmond be travelling through this country alone, or whether he is retired hither with
any

any companion, what have I to do with it? or why should I think of him farther than ever to follow him with my grateful wishes?

It is now eleven o'clock—I have left my bed since a quarter past five, for to sleep was impossible; ever since the hour when *I thought* it probable Mr. Desmond (who knows I am an early riser) might come—I have been expecting him, but, perhaps, he has changed his mind, or his friend may have engaged him.—It is market-day at the neighbouring town, and I have an opportunity of sending this letter, or rather this enormous packet, to the post, by my honest farmer, who has just sent in to say he is going—I therefore seal it, and will endeavour to reason away this ridiculous flutter, which the idea of a visitor gives me, (probably, because I have been of late so little used to company) and sit quietly down to finish a view I am doing for you, of the prospect from my windows; in the progress of which, hitherto,
I have,

I have, contrary to my usual custom, pleased myself.

Farewell, my dear sister—perhaps my commissioner may, on his return from town, bring me what would now be the most soothing and consoling to my spirits, a letter from my Fanny.

GERALDINE VERNEY.

L E T-

L E T T E R XVI.

T O M R. B E T H E L.

From Bridge-foot, a small Cluster of Cottages, in Herefordshire, June 8th, 1791.

WHEN a man knows, my dear Bethel, that he is acting like a fool, the most usual way is to keep it to himself, and to endeavour to persuade the world that he is actually performing the part of a wise man; but I, who am, as you have often said, a strange, eccentric being, and not much like any other, am going to do just the reverse of this, and to acknowledge my folly without even trying at palliation; nay, I accuse myself of having the *appearance* of something much worse than folly, which is ingratitude to you; but, as this is in appearance only, it is the former accusation alone to which I shall plead; and much eloquence will be necessary to supply the defect of *reason*, which I know
you

you will think my conduct betrays, when you see my letter dated from such a place, and are told that it is within half a mile of the residence of Geraldine—Have patience, however, till I can relate the cause of all this, and, though I was neither bred to the bar, where, for money, our learned in the laws undertake

“ To make the worse seem the better reason.*”

Nor am *naturally* endowed with the faculty of doing so, I shall, at least, be able, I think, to convince you, that no motive injurious either to my friendship towards you, or my more tender affection for Geraldine, has led me to visit her in a way that may be called clandestine, or to conceal from you my journey and my intentions ; though, to say the truth, I did not mean to inform you of it till I saw you, nor should I have done so, but for the accidental circumstances of having first met her lovely children, and then her lovely self—

* Milton.

How then, you ask, “were you concealed in her immediate neighbourhood, without any intention of either?—Incredible folly!”—Such, however, *were* my intentions—I allow, if you please, all the folly, but, I insist upon it, that there was no sort of harm in such a gratification as I proposed to myself, by which myself only (if romantic attachment can hurt a man) was alone likely to be hurt; and, for which, therefore, I should hold myself accountable to no one, my dear friend; not even to *you*, if I did not feel that your sincere and generous attachment to me, deserves all that confidence which I can repose in you, in matters that relate only to *myself*.—Your last letter describing the total ruin of Verney, and the dispersion of his family, completed the measure of that uneasiness I had long sustained on account of Geraldine—It was in vain I endeavoured to reason myself out of it—I find, that seven-and-twenty is not the age of reason, or, at least, where the heart is so deeply concerned

concerned—There were a hundred causes why I had rather have gone, at the moment I set out, to Nova-Scotia, or even to Nova-Zembla, than to England—But the idea of Geraldine deserted in distress!—Of Geraldine in poverty and sorrow! obliterated every other consideration in the world; and within four-and-twenty hours after the receipt of your last letter, which found me at St. Germain, I set out post, without taking even Warham with me, or saying whither I was going; and in six-and-thirty hours afterwards was at Dover, from whence I made my way, as quickly as I could, to the post-town in Herefordshire, near which I had learned, (it matters not by what means) that Geraldine had, with her children, fixed her humble abode.

I told the people at the inn where I put up, that, being in an ill state of health, (an assertion, to the truth of which, my figure and countenance bears some testimony) I was directed by my physicians to travel;

travel ; and had been advised to bend my way towards Wales, staying some little time at any place where the face of the country appeared agreeable, or the air salubrious—I added, that I should stay, perhaps, a week or ten days in this neighbourhood ; but as it was not for their interest to find out a private lodging for me, I applied, for that purpose, to the hair-dresser, who professed, over his shop window, to “ dress ladies and gentlemen in the very newest London fashion.”

This very intelligent personage informed me, that what I wanted was, at present, somewhat hard to be met with ; for that “ the pleasanter and almost only lodging *near* that town, which was, however, about six miles off, or rather better, was lately taken, by a lady and her children, for a year certain”—I affected to be struck with the description he gave of the pleasantness of the situation on the banks of the Wye ; and asked, if he thought any cottage in the neighbourhood of the house
he

he described, could afford me a bed-chamber? I cared not how humble and plain, if it were merely clean; saying farther, that, as health was my pursuit, money was no object to me; and that, therefore, I would give any person, who could find such an accommodation for me, a handsome present for their trouble; and would hire the apartment for a month certain, though I possibly might not remain in it a week.

My honest barber, whose zeal for my service was now completely awakened, set forth immediately to see what could be done for me; and, in the afternoon, returned to say, that, in a very clean cottage, he had found a decent bed-chamber, which I instantly set off, on foot, to see—walking not much like an invalid. I found the humble thatched cottage was one among a group of five or six, which are situated among orchards, at the foot of that range of woody hills, which are immediately opposite the farm-house inhabited by Geraldine—There was no ceiling to the
room

room but the thatch and rafters, and no curtains to the bed, yet the chamber was clean, and I determined to take immediate possession of it—I therefore ratified my bargain to the great delight of the old man and his wife, who alone inhabited the cottage; and having satisfied my conductor, even beyond his expectation, I engaged him to return to the town for my baggage, and to attend me every day with a lad from the inn, from whence I am supplied with provisions.

I then retired to my lowly couch, and slept better than I have done since the receipt of your letter, in the certainty that, by the rising sun of the next morning, I should see the house where the loveliest and most injured woman on the earth hides her undeserved misfortunes.

You will believe me, my friend, when I protest to you, that this satisfaction, and that of witnessing her real situation, (which I hoped to do, without her knowing I was near her) were the only gratifications I
proposed

proposed to myself; for many days I enjoyed it, and was content; nor did I voluntarily seek any other satisfaction.

“There are,” says St. Preux, in those enchanting letters of the incomparable Rousseau, “but two divisions of the world, that where Julie is, and that where she is not”—I forget the French, and I have not the book here—To the force of the sentiment, however, I bear witness—*To me* the world is divided into only two parts; or rather, to me, it is all a blank where Geraldine is not—Yet, my friend, is this declaration no contradiction to what I often, and particularly, of late, asserted, that I have *now* (if indeed I ever was weak enough to indulge it) not the remotest hope of her ever rewarding an attachment, with which, as I know it is wrong, I wish not that she should *even be acquainted*—But, if you have ever truly loved, can you, Bethel, blame me for indulging that delicious, and surely that blameless sensation, which is derived from watching over the peace and

5

safety

safety of a beloved object, from whom we do not even hope a return? While I could open my eyes in a morning and see the sun's first beams enlighten the opposite heath, and fall on the roof of Geraldine's habitation, making its high clusters of heavy, antique chimneys, visible, among the firs and elms that surround it—I used to say to myself, “*there she is!*—There, she will soon awaken to fulfil her maternal duties; to cultivate, to strengthen, or adorn, the purest of minds, by some useful or elegant occupation.—She is, if not happy, at least tranquil; and now and then, perhaps, bestows a thought, and a kind wish, on her friend Desmond.”

Indeed, Bethel, with this satisfaction, (romantic, and even ridiculous as it would, I know, be thought by those who could not understand the nature of my affection for Geraldine) I should have been perfectly content, and having for a little while indulged myself in it, I should have

fought you at Bath, have made you a confession of my folly, and then, after having given a few days to friendship, have again gone back to France; for England is not my country, when I can hear only, in whatever company I go into, of Geraldine's unhappiness, and the folly, extravagancies, and utter ruin of her husband.

This was my project; I lingered, however, from day to day, finding happiness, I could not easily determine to relinquish, in catching, now and then, at a window, which I fancied to be that of the room where she slept, the distant view of a figure, which I persuaded myself was her's—The window was only partly seen; the tall elms, which grow round a sort of court, immediately before the house, hid it half, and though, when the setting sun played on the casement, I could more distinctly see it; I found, that if I would really satisfy myself with the certain view of Geraldine, I must seek some spot, where, from its
elevation,

elevation, I could, by means of a small pocket telescope, have an uninterrupted view of these windows.

I confined myself, however, to the house all day—you know I never am weary of solitude, nor am ever destitute of employment; these days, therefore, appeared neither tedious nor unpleasant, since, at their close, I was to be engaged in seeking for the means of satisfying my wishes; and since I could, as they passed, look out of my low and narrow casements towards the habitation of Geraldine, and whisper to myself—“*She is there.*”

At length, in the woods that skirt the feet of these hills, which would, about London, be accounted inaccessible mountains, I found a little, shady knoll, to which the gush of innumerable streams of water attracted me—I ascended by the almost perpendicular path, which seems to have been traced only by boys in their excursions after birds, or by the sheep that sometimes feed here; and reaching the top,

I had the satisfaction to find, that though it was surrounded on all sides by trees, so as to form the most perfect concealment, they were low towards the top; and that a little rocky crag, that hung over the twisted roots of an old thorn and a blighted ash, afforded me a view of many of the windows of Geraldine's residence; at a greater distance, indeed, than from my cottage, but much less obscured by the intervening objects—Here, then, I resolved to pass some part of all the few days that I had determined to stay here.

Four days since, I was returning, about one o'clock, from this my morning occupation, when the heat of the morning, and the freshness of the grass in that part of the wood, through which I was passing, induced me to throw myself on the ground, and continue the perusal of a book I had with me, on which I was extremely intent, when I heard the prattle of children, but as I had often seen such little rustic wanderers in the woods, I heeded not the circumstance,

cumstance; till suddenly, Flora running forward, I heard an infant scream at her approach—I raised my eyes, and saw a maid-servant with the two elder children of Geraldine!—I started up to prevent the little girl's being more alarmed by the dog, and as I wished not to betray myself, I enquired the name of the children, yet, in a way so confused, that, I believe, the servant thought my manner very strange—I supposed it impossible, after an absence of twelve months, that George could recollect me, but he certainly did, though my name was no longer familiar to him; for, after looking at me earnestly a moment, he returned my embraces, and even hung round my neck—What delight! to press to my heart this lovely little fellow, so dear to me on account of his mother—I was so charmed with him, and with the eagerness he shewed to continue with me, that I am afraid, I more than once forgot my precaution; however, the children, at length, left me. I imagined the servant

would conclude, that it was some person of the neighbourhood, and would think no more about it—I continued my usual rambles therefore in the woods, but not at those hours when it was probable I should again meet them.

Convinced that Geraldine was less uncomfortable in her new situation than my fears had led me to suppose ; having been now above a week in the neighbourhood, and fearing my remaining there much longer might raise some suspicions, that I would not for millions of worlds excite—I began to think of quitting it, and had once or twice determined to stay only *one* day longer ; yet, when the day of departure came, put it off till the next—But, on Thursday, I resorted to the spot, where I usually passed the evening ; the weather was uncommonly lovely—I had, during the preceding day, taken my walk, at an hour when I fancied Geraldine was at her dinner, round her garden, and was effectually concealed by a thick hedge of cut
ever-

evergreens; but I was happy enough to be mistaken, as to her hour of dining—She came out with her children—I saw her within ten paces of me—She spoke cheerfully—I heard once more that enchanting voice—I dared hardly breathe, lest she should be alarmed; but, as soon as I could escape unperceived, I crossed among the high furze and hollow ways of the common, and returned home by a road remote from that which led from her residence to my cottage.

The delicious impression, however, which the sight of Geraldine had left on my mind, the uncommon beauty of the evening, united to that of the scene, contributed to soothe my mind—I sat down, and began to read; but every thing that took my thoughts from her was insipid—I let my book fall, and fell into a *reverie*—But, I own, my dear friend, that the pleasing dreams in which I was indulging myself were interrupted by the recollection of your frequent remonstrances, and

particularly by that question which you have so often repeated—"What I meant by all this?"—My heart, however, could answer without hesitation, that I meant no injury to any human being—Nor, unworthy and undeserving as Verney is, would I wish to rob him of the affections of his wife, admitting it possible he could possess them—Thus far my conscience clearly acquitted me; (would to heaven it could do so in every other circumstance of my life) and I had settled it with myself, that while I avoided giving any such evidence of my attachment to her, as might tend to cast a reflection on the fair and unimpeached fame of the lovely woman for whom I felt it; I might yield to its influence with impunity—I know you will declare against any such inference; but I had convinced myself I was right, and lamented that I had ever left England, under the idea of curing myself of a passion, which constituted the charm of my existence; since, by doing so, I have, without losing what-

eve

ever uneasiness may occasionally embitter that attachment, created for myself others, which will not soon be dissipated.—In these sort of contemplations, I had some time been lost, when suddenly my dog roused me—I looked up, and saw Geraldine herself, who, having perceived me, was hastily retreating from the sight of a stranger in a place so remote.

Could I, Bethel, then avoid speaking to her?—It was impossible—I flew forwards to meet her—I apologized for the alarm I had occasioned her—I entreated leave to attend her home, though, when she accepted my assistance to conduct her down the declivity, on the summit of which we met, I trembled so, that I could with difficulty support myself—She seemed amazed at meeting me; but after some time recovered herself, and asked, in the way of conversation, several of those questions, which, from any other person, or in any other situation, would have been indifferent; but I could not answer them with

the case she put them; and I am sure I behaved like an idiot, for, on a sudden, she grew cold, and reserved, and, I fancied, wished me away, though I could not collect courage enough to go—At length, conscious of the foolish figure I made, sitting silently opposite to her, and afraid of entering into any conversation, least it should lead to topics I could not determine to speak upon, I collected resolution enough to wish her a good night, and ask leave to see her again to-day—This she granted in the same distant way that she would have granted it to a common acquaintance, and I left her, half frantic, to think that I am perfectly indifferent to her, though, three hours before, I was declaring to myself that I harboured not a wish to be otherwise.

It is now near eleven o'clock—I find I have an opportunity of sending this to the post—I dispatch it, therefore, and hasten to take one look, one last look, for such, indeed, I mean it should be; and if I can gain courage to talk to her as to a sister,
who

who can feel for, and pity my errors and my weakness, I think, that whatever I suffer in tearing myself from her, I shall yet, after I have once got over the pangs of an interview, which may be the last I shall enjoy for years, be more easy than I have been for many months.—Adieu, dear Bethel—I feel as anxious as if the fate of my whole life depended on the next three hours ; but perhaps it does.

Your's, faithfully,

LIONEL DESMOND.

P. S. I shall not, certainly, stay here above a day longer—I think not—As after I have taken leave of her, upon what pretence can I linger in the neighbourhood ? yet, as I have not determined, whether I shall reach you at Bath, by the cross-country road, or go first to London, and for a day or two into Kent ; in short, as I have not determined what I shall do ; and, proba-

bly, shall fluctuate *à la* Waverly, till the hour of my setting forth—You may as well direct hither; because I shall leave orders at the post-house, whither my letters are to be forwarded. Who said, that sorrow had anticipated the injury of time; and that the beautiful and once admired Geraldine had lost all her personal attractions?—To me, she appears a thousand times lovelier than ever; and was it merely her form and face, to which my heart yields homage, it would be more than ever her captive.

L E T.

L E T T E R X V I I .

T O M I S S W A V E R L Y .

‘ June 9th, 1797.

I HAVE seen Mr. Desmond again, my Fanny; and if he had before a claim to my regard, it is now heightened into as much esteem as I can feel for any human being—Yes! he is unhappy; and it is to me, as to a sister and a friend, he communicates his unhappiness—Ah! what would I not do to relieve from its solicitude, that noble and ingenuous heart, which places such confidence in me?—But, of this, enough—I only say thus much, to vindicate him from my unjust and improper suspicions, of having come here clandestinely, on account of the foreign lady, of whom we heard so many idle reports.—Desmond is alone; and quits this neighbourhood to-day.—He talks of visiting his friend, Bethel,

thel, who is at Bath; and soon afterwards, of returning to France—If he goes to Bath you will see him; but I, perhaps, shall see him no more for some years—As those years, with me, are, probably, to pass in this remote solitude; where, it would be violating the common rules, which the world expects us to observe, were I to receive his visits, how innocent and brotherly forever, they would assuredly be.

While I yet write, he crosses the bridge on horseback; and George, who is astonishingly fond of him, has run out, with his maid, to meet him—Desmond gets off; he puts the dear little boy on his horse; and, with one arm round him, he makes Peggy lead the horse forward—I hear the laugh of infantine delight even hither—There is nothing, Fanny, in my opinion, so graceful, so enchanting, in a young man, as this tenderness towards children—It becomes every man, but none more than Desmond; who is never so amiable in my eyes, as
when

when he is playing with George—And my little girl, she now lisps out his name ; and though she has seen him only twice, is a candidate for a seat on his knee ; and turns towards him, those sweet blue eyes, without that pensive look that her delicate countenance generally expresses ; as if she knew, even in babyhood, her fate to be marked with sorrow—But my noisy boy, and his friend, are at the door. I hear Desmond say, he is come to bid him good-by ; and the child enquires, why he goes, and when he will come again.—I must go to wish him a good journey, and deliver him from the little, wild interrogatories of his play-fellow.—

He is gone ! and I feel ridiculously low—I say, ridiculously, though, I trust, I do not give way to an improper sentiment—But why should it be wrong to admire and esteem an excellent and amiable man, from whom I have received more than brotherly kindness ?—Why, indeed, should I question the propriety of this regard, be-

cause I am married?—Does that prevent our feeling and loving excellence wherever found?—and why should it?—To disguise these sentiments, would be to acknowledge them to be criminal—I rather glory in avowing them, because I am conscious they are just, pure, and honorable.—Why, indeed, should I hide, or apologize, for the tears I even now shed, when I think that I may never see Desmond again?—What a treasure is a friend, so disinterested, so noble-minded, as he is? And why should I not regret him?—How soothing, to a sick heart in solitude and sadness, is the voice of kindness, administering the consolations, of reason and good sense, dignified with all the graces of a polished mind—Such have I heard from Desmond, in our last conference; and can I help regretting, that I shall hear them no more?

But it is not to you, my Fanny, I ought to excuse myself, (if, indeed, it could be necessary at all,) for my regard;
nay,

nay, I will call it my affection, for our admirable friend—Nor, though I feel his departure as a privation, just at this moment, can I lament having seen him.—I find that there is a possibility that I may be of use to one of his friends, in some disagreeable circumstance; and with what delight shall I embrace an opportunity of being useful to any of his acquaintance or connexions.—Farewell, my dear sister—I am unable to write a long letter to-day—I will go to my books, and to my walk in the wood; for those are resources that, I find, soothe me to tranquillity; while the complaints of George, that Mr. Desmond is gone, and that he shall not ride any more, and his little innocent questions, when he will come again? and if he is gone to see papa? quite overcome my spirits. I will write a longer letter in a day or two, though I shall have now very little to say.

June

June 10th, six in the Evening.

What is to become of me now ?—An express from the neighbouring post-town, accompanied by a French servant, has just delivered me the enclosed letter from Mr. Verney—I enclose it ; for I have not strength or time to copy it—Oh ! Fanny, what shall I—ought I to do ?—In truth, I know not !—How unfortunate, that Desmond is gone ; and that I cannot have the benefit of his advice.—Gracious heaven ! What does fate intend to do with this miserable, persecuted being ?

LET-

L E T T E R XVIII*.

Paris, May 22, 1791.

MY DEAR,

MY very worthy friends, Monsieur le Duc de Romagnecourt, and Monsieur le Chevalier de Boisbelle, are, this day, setting off for England on a journey, relative to the affairs of the King of France, their master—They are returning to Paris directly; and having heard me express a wish to see you here, have undertaken to escort you over; and the Duke himself attends you with this—I desire, therefore, that you will set off with him, as soon as you conveniently can—As to the children, I think, travelling with them will be inconvenient to you; and should suppose your mother would take them for the time you are abroad; or, perhaps, you might leave them very safe in the care of their servants.

* Enclosed in the foregoing.

—You

—You will do as you like about bringing servants for yourself; but, I think, you will find English women only encumbrances, and may hire French maid servants here; as to men, as we shall live altogether at the Duc de Romagnecourt's, his *suite* of servants will be ours. I shall expect the pleasure of your arrival with impatience, where all things are going on well for the suppression of the present vile proceedings.

I am, my dear,

Your's, affectionately,

RICHARD VERNEY.

I repeat my question, my sister—What ought I to do?—Good heaven! what an inconsiderate man is Mr. Verney; and, I am sorry to add, how unfeeling!—Leave my children!—Accompany strangers to Paris!—The former I will not do; and surely I ought not to do the latter; but on something I must determine; for, I under-

understand, from the French servant, to whom I have been speaking, that this Duke is actually waiting at the inn, at the neighbouring town, and expects to be asked hither—What wildness—what madness, in Mr. Verney, to propose such a scheme!—Whither can I turn me?—Oh! would to heaven Desmond was not gone!—Write to me instantly—Yet how shall I put off my determination till I receive your answer?—How evade going?—For surely I ought not to go.—I believe it will be best to write a letter of excuse to this French nobleman; saying, how impossible it is for me to undertake a journey, so suddenly.—Surely Mr. Verney cannot mean——But I will not distract myself with useless conjectures, with suppositions more tormenting than the miserable realities. I send this to the town, on purpose to have it reach you by the earliest post; but I tremble so, that I fear it is hardly legible. The Chevalier de Boisselle has
not,

not, I find, taken the trouble to come down hither with his noble friend. Surely he cannot be gone in search — But, again, I am bewildered and distracted.— Pity, and instantly relieve, your very unhappy,

GERALDINE.

L E T-

L E T T E R X I X.

T O M R. B E T H E L.

Rofs, June 11, 1791.

BY this time, my friend, you expect me at Bath; and there I should certainly have been on Monday next, if I had not been, by a most singular and unexpected accident, stopped here.

I took leave of Geraldine yesterday morning—I left her situated in a place, where if she enjoyed not that affluence and prosperity to which she has been accustomed, she was, I thought, tranquil and content.—She bade me adieu with the tenderest friendship, yet with that guarded expression of it that her situation demanded. I blessed her for the generous kindness she shewed me; I respected the reserve her circumstances made it proper for her to adopt.—I thought by her eyes—and were there
ever

ever eyes more expreffive ? that ſhe was ſorry to ſee me depart, yet knew that it was proper I ſhould go.—Such ſenſations, in a more violent degree, I alſo felt.—To tear myſelf from her was now more difficult than I ever yet found it ; but I knew it would be injurious to her to ſtay ; and never yet did my propenſity to ſelf-indulgence conquer my ſenſe of what I owed to the diſintereſted tendernels I bear her.

It was neceſſary then to go—and I dared not tell her how cruelly I felt the neceſſity ; I affected ſome degree of chearfulneſs ; I played with her lovely boy, and tried to diſguiſe, though I believe ineffectually, the contending ſenſations with which I was agitated—at length I left her. As I looked back, I beheld her at the window as long as ſhe could ſee me, for the little fellow would not be content to quit it while I was in ſight ; and ſhe held him in her arms.—At length the deſcent of the bridge hid her from my view.—I then haſtened on to this place, which is about
ten

ten miles from her habitation, for hither I had directed my portmanteau-trunk to be sent from my cottage; and here an horse, I had purchased some days before, waited for me—As I found it easier and pleasanter to have an horse of my own, now that I am able to ride, than to go in a post-chaise or by any other conveyance.—I was then giving some directions about the forwarding my trunk, and was just going to mount my new purchase in the yard of the inn; when a berlin, apparently belonging to a foreigner of distinction, attended by three French or Swiss servants, drove to the door—an appearance, which though about the affairs of others I have not much curiosity, I own excited it strongly.—I stopped therefore, and saw alighting from the carriage, a man about three or four-and-forty; he seemed to be a person of rank; but he wore, with some strong symptoms of his own consequence, that bewildered look which I have often observed in travellers who are unacquainted

with the language and manners of the people they are among.—He spoke French to the landlord and the waiter, who not having the least idea of what he said, were as much distressed as he was; a person, however, soon after made his appearance, who seemed to be a sort of travelling companion, and who undertook to be his interpreter; but so miserably did he execute this office, that the honest Welchman and his people, were more puzzled by his incomprehensible English, than they had before been by the French of his superior.—The showy equipage, and the number of attendants, however, raised so much respect in the breasts of the landlord and his household, that they were extremely desirous of accommodating their great customers, if they could but find out what they wished for.

The first idea that occurs to an Englishman, on such an occasion, is a good substantial dinner; this, therefore, by such signs as he thought most likely to elucidate his meaning,

meaning, the master of the inn proposed ; and as there is a language in all countries by which eating or loving may be expressed, this was at length assented to. The gentleman attendant, or, as the landlord called him, t'other Mounseer, was shewn into the larder ; which, though it was not quite so well furnished as that of the Bear at Bath, or some others of equal fame, yet appeared very satisfactory ; and a certain number of dishes were ordered to be prepared, to the satisfaction of both parties.

As there was something excessively comique in the distress of the landlord and his wife, who could get no more intelligence from the strange servants than from their master, I could not forbear staying a little to be amused with it. I had nothing to do better, and was indifferent whether I sat out before dinner or afterwards, on my solitary journey : but I had yet another motive for staying than to witness this odd scene ; I thought I might be of some use to these foreigners, by explaining to the people

what they really wanted, or what house they came in search of; for they enquired for some place or person in the neighbourhood, about whom or which, the people could comprehend nothing.

The landlord, however, seemed fully persuaded, that after so good a dinner as had been ordered, matters must clear up; infinite, therefore, was the bustling and fussing to have this ready.—The weather was hot; and the landlord, with his wig half off, a good round, plump Welch head, a fiery red waistcoat, and his pompadour Sunday coat, exerted his broad squat figure to the utmost; while his wife put on her best plaited cap with pink ribbands; a fine flourished shawl; and a pea green flounced stuffed petticoat, under a flowered cotton gown, drawn up; and, notwithstanding this elegance, (all to do honour to the British females before outlandish gentlemen,) she was as anxiously superintending the roasting and boiling, as if she was providing in her common array for the ordinary

ordinary of a market day, on which the custom of her house depended.

At length the dinner was ready, and the landlord marched in with it; but he had not remained long in the room before he left it, and came puffing into that where I sat, in redoubled consternation.—“ Oh lord, Sir,” said he, “ do you understand French ?—Lord, Sir, if I ben’t quite, as one may say, at a non-plush; not one syllable more can I make out from that there gentleman that fancies how he talk English, than that he is come to fetch away some lady, that he calls Madam something, and will have it that she’s here.—Lord, Sir, I’m quite flounded for my share, and knows no more what he’d be at, than my little Nan there in the cradle.—I wish, for my share, folks would speak English; for why ?—such lingo as these foreigners use is of no service in the world, and only confounds people, ready to drive them crazy—Then they gabble so plaguy fast, that there’s no catching a word by the way,

even to guess a little by what they would be at.—Sir, if your honour has a sinattering of their tongue, and would not think it too great a condescension, seeing they are Frenchmen, to make yourself known to them, 'twould be doing me a great service, if so be you'd just give me an item of their intentions—for my wife she's teizing me like a crazy woman, to know if they want beds made up, and if they do, whether their beds are to be made like as ours are?—I says toher, why how the murrain now Jenn, should I know, but I'll go ask yon gentleman, perhaps he can let us in to the right of the thing, which to be sure I should be glad of; for, Sir, they say that one of these is a duke."—To stop this harangue, which seemed not otherwise to be near its conclusion, I assured my landlord that I knew a little of their tongue; and, if he would order one of their servants to me, I would send them in a message, expressive of my wish to be of use to them if in my power.

In

In consequence of this, their answer informed me, that the Duc de Romagnecourt was much honoured and flattered by my attention, and requested the happiness of seeing me.—Judge, dear Bethel, of the astonishment, the mixture of wonder, indignation and confusion, with which I learned that Mr. Verney is become the intimate friend of this Duc de Romagnecourt; that it is with him he resides at Paris; and, that it is under his escort he has sent for Geraldine to join him there.

If I had heard that I was, at one blow, reduced from affluence, to depend on the bounty of upstart greatness—dependence which of all other species is most hideous to my imagination; if I had been told that I had no longer a friend in the world; nay, that Bethel himself had forsaken me, I think I should not have felt a sensation of greater anguish and amazement.—Monsieur D'Auberval enquired of me if I knew Madame Verney; though I saw by the Duke's manner, that *he* was the person in-

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terested,

terested. I knew not what to answer ; and my embarrassment must have been visible, if they had not imputed part of it, to my natural *diffidence* as an Englishman ; and (as they thought) an Englishman of inferior rank ; for they saw I had no servants with me, and seemed to wonder how a person who travelled in his own country without a *suite*, should be so perfectly versed in the language of theirs.—I now, however, understood the purposes of their journey ; and under pretence of making some enquiries, I withdrew to consider of what I ought to do.

To interfere between Geraldine and her husband (I cannot write his name with patience) was, at least, improper—To give her notice that I was still near her, was impertinent ; and making myself ridiculously of consequence, in an affair where my protection was not, perhaps, requisite.—This Duc de Romagnecourt, though he had the air of a veteran *debauché* ; and, though his conversation, little as I heard

of

of it, confirmed the idea his appearance impressed—*might* be a married man; a man of respectability and honour; at least he was one to whom it was evident Mr. Verney chose to entrust his wife; and what right had I to interfere? How could I indeed do so, without its being known that I had been privately residing in her immediate neighbourhood; and encouraging a belief, that I had some fancied authority, to exert that influence which only a brother or some very near relation, is supposed to have a right to exert.—The more I considered the man, this Duc de Romagnecourt, his behaviour, his conversation; the more improper, nay, impossible it seemed for Geraldine to set out with him on such a journey; yet I did not see how I could, with propriety, save her from it by my direct interference. I therefore determined to give the Duc de Romagnecourt the direction he requested me to procure for him; to trust to the first reception of such a proposal to the sense and prudence of Ge-

raldine, and to await where I was the event of the letter which, by a servant of his own, he sent to her from her husband.—It contained, as the Duke informed me, an injunction to set off immediately with him for Paris.—I affected merely to know there was such a lady as Madame Verney in the neighbourhood ; and, having now made up my mind, I returned to these worthy friends of Verney's ; gave them the address they desired, and saw the French valet set out accompanied by a guide from the inn.—It is impossible to describe to you what I felt while these men were absent ; nor the effort with which I supported the conversation that the Duc de Romagnecourt invited me to engage in.—However, I commanded myself as much as possible, as it was absolutely necessary to prevent any suspicion of my being particularly interested for Mrs. Verney ; and I wished to lead him to speak of her, which he perhaps would not have done with so little reserve, if he had suspected that I was acquainted with her.

It

It is not very difficult, after having seen a good deal of this best of all possible worlds, to enter into much of a man's character, even from a first interview.—I soon learned that the Duc de Romagnecourt, was a man of very high fashion, and very great fortune in France; that he was very much confided in by the court, and of course extremely averse to the claims of the people; that he execrated the struggle they had so successfully made for their liberties, and now visited England with a view to engage in favour of an opposite system, (which he said, would soon have *le dessus** again;) those, among us whose interest it was most effectually to crush every attempt at reform.—He hinted, that in his way through London, he had succeeded in this negotiation beyond his hopes; and that he was to have a farther confirmation of the support that had been promised him on his return, which he pro-

* The upper hand.

posed immediately, *avec la charmante femme*, whom he expected to conduct.

Proud, profligate, and perfidious, accustomed to entertain high ideas of self-importance; and seldom finding any of his inclinations resisted, because he had power and money to purchase their indulgence, the Duc de Romagnecourt was but little disposed to conceal his principles or his views.—I learned that when he was in England some few months since, he saw and admired Geraldine, to whom he had then been introduced by her husband.—I understood that Verney was under very great pecuniary obligations to this man, who now actually supports him in France; and the inference I drew from the knowledge I thus obtained of the character of the one, and the necessities of the other, was too dreadful; I recoiled with abhorrence from its immediate impression, but still it returned with undiminished anguish, and every word uttered by the Duc de
Romagne-

Romagnecourt, served only to confirm my apprehensions, and encrease my uneasiness.

I determined that, whatever might be the consequence, no consideration upon earth should induce me to quit the country, while this most illustrious personage remained in it; and having made that resolution, I awaited, with as little visible anxiety as possible, the return of the messengers who were sent to Geraldine.

I had, indeed, very little occasion for any other exertion, than that of patience; for the Duke, with all the forward consequence of which we accuse (and sometimes justly accuse) his countrymen, entered, nothing doubting my approbation, into a history of himself—His rank, his fortune, his feats, were described—nor was he more guarded on the subjects of his politics, or his amours.

In regard to the first, he was, I found, a most inveterate enemy to the revolution—Deprecated the idea of any degree of freedom being allowed to the inferior ranks of
men

men in any country; yet owned that he had, with the duplicity that was adopted by many of his compatriots, appeared to yield to a torrent they could not resist; but while they seemed to go with the stream, he hinted, that measures were taking effectually to turn its course; and he triumphed in the discomfiture of the reptiles, who had thus dared to aspire to the privilege of freemen; and saw, in his mind's eye, the leaders of this obnoxious *canaille* languishing out their miserable lives in the most dreary dungeons of the new-erected Bastile—Such was the colour of his politics. His love, ever successful, and without thorns, was, as he represented it, *toujours couleur de rose*—He scrupled not to hint, in terms that could not be misunderstood, that he had been very highly favoured by some of the most exalted ladies of the French court; that he was an universal favourite; and that there was no woman in this country, or his own, who could long remain insensible of his
powers

powers of pleasing, when he chose to make a point of gaining their favours. In this style—(and I listened to him with contempt that stifled my indignation)—he ran on for some time ; till the wine he drank, much heavier than that he was usually accustomed to, began to have a very visible effect on him—His companion, a Monsieur d'Auberval, (though I understand another person came over with him) was even more inebriated than himself—And I learned, from what they together discoursed, that Verney had no intention of meeting his wife at Paris, but was going to Metz with some other French noblemen deeply embarked in the cause, whatever it is, that now engages their intriguing spirit ; and that Mrs. Verney was, after some stay at a magnificent seat of the Duc de Romagnecourt's, about five leagues from Paris, to follow her husband to Metz—In short, dreadful as the confirmation of my fears was, I had no longer to doubt but that

Geraldine

Geraldine was sold by the wretch who dares call her his wife.

Nothing but the reflection of what I owed to Geraldine, could have restrained me from expressing the indignation I felt—It was, however, necessary to dissemble—I am a wretched hypocrite; nor could I even in this emergency have succeeded, if my companions had been very accurate observers—At length, after some hours of such tortures, as I thought it hardly possible to feel and exist; the men, who had been sent to Geraldine with her husband's letter, returned, and brought to Monsieur de Romagnecourt a note, written in French, of which this is the substance.

“ Mrs. Verney presents her compliments to the Duc de Romagnecourt; and, as it is quite out of her power, on account of ill health, and from other circumstances, to leave England immediately; and equally so, to quit her children, who must necessarily be very inconvenient companions

to

to him; she must beg leave to decline the honor he intends her of a place in his carriage on his return to Paris; and the letter with which she takes the liberty of troubling him to Mr. Verney, will account to him for her delaying her journey.

“ Mrs. Verney is sorry the small house and establishment she has here, makes it impossible for her to receive the Duc de Romagnecourt at her present residence; and obliges her to take this method of thanking him for the civility he intended her.”

Bridge-foot Manor-farm,

June 11th, 1791.

Though the purport of this note was exactly what I expected from the presence of mind and good sense of Geraldine; and though I was relieved from my first anxious apprehensions, as to the terror she would be in on receiving it, I had yet but too many fears to contend with. I saw that Monsieur de Romagnecourt was mortified for the moment, but by no means so much discouraged as to desist from his pursuit; and

and after reading the note over twice or thrice, admiring the elegance of the writing, and the purity of the French, which, he said, was such, as not one in a thousand of his countrywomen could have produced, he strutted about the room, though with somewhat less dignity than usual, for he could hardly stand; and then calling her a lovely prude, he determined to try, the next morning, what his own irresistible presence could do towards thawing the ice of this cold English beauty; and, in this disposition, I left him at one in the morning.

I saw that any attempt to dissuade him from such a scheme, would be fruitless; and, indeed, I thought it best to let her positive and personal refusal convince him at once, that his presumptuous and insolent proposal must be abortive—Still it was painful to me, to think that Geraldine must be insulted by hearing it.—I knew, that elevated as her mind is, above those frivolous and unworthy apprehensions,

fions,

sions, to which women fancy it an amiable weakness to yield; yet, that such an address, from such a man, in a place where she was entirely unprotected; and the application coming from her husband, could not but be altogether most distressing to her.—Though I could not save her from it, it was possible to soften the shock, by giving her notice of it; and assuring her, that there was within her reach, a man who would lay down his life, rather than see her exposed to any unworthy treatment.

Sleep was with me entirely out of the question—At the earliest dawn of the morning, I was on horseback, and directed my course to my former residence, the cottage—My ancient host and his wife were just making their homely breakfast, on brown bread and cyder, when I entered their kitchen; they were rejoiced, yet amazed, to see me; and I was compelled, once more, to have recourse to stratagem, to conceal the real motive of my second visit.

visit.—I told them, I had found myself not so well after I left their house, and had, therefore, returned from Ross, to abide with them a few days longer.

I then considered in what way I should announce to Geraldine the visit she was to expect; and I concluded, that I would go to the house and send up my name—Slowly and pensively I began this short walk—I dreaded for her the uneasiness I was about to inflict—I dreaded for myself, that I should betray, in a way too unequivocally expressive of my sentiments, all I felt.—To tell her that I apprehended her husband had consigned her to another, was to intimate to her a degree of infamy, almost too shocking to be imagined, and that of a man, with whom she was, perhaps, to pass her life, and who was the father of her children; yet, to let her, for a moment, think of obeying him, which, it was possible, she might do, if it struck her as being her duty, was still more dreadful; and I saw there was nothing to be hoped for,

for, but from that rectitude of understanding, which I have always remarked in her; but I even dreaded the excess of those strict principles, which I have often known to impel her, contrary to her own wishes, and her own sense of propriety, to follow the dictates of those, who, conscious as she must be, of their mental inferiority, had, she thought, a right to her compliance.

As soon as I could distinctly discern the windows, I saw they were already open, though it was yet early—The morning was lovely; but my mind was too much occupied to suffer me to enjoy it. I knew Geraldine used to walk early in the little court that is before her apartments; but now there was no traces of her having been out; nor did I hear the voice of my little playfellow cheerfully greeting my return, as, I own, I had fondly anticipated—All seemed mournfully silent; yet, I thought I heard some footsteps moving softly about the house. I tapped at the old, thick, carved door with my stick; for there is no
knocker

knocker—Nobody answered—I repeated it—Still no answer—At length, after waiting near a quarter of an hour at the door, I lifted up the iron latch, and opened it—I crossed the brick hall, but saw nobody—The door of the parlour, where Geraldine usually sits, was ajar; I pushed it gently open, and was struck with a group of figures, which exactly brought to my mind that which had been so forcibly and painfully impressed on it, by my dream at Hauteville.—

Geraldine was extended on an old fashion cane sofa, or what is, I think, called a fettee, supported by cushions of green stuff, and with her right arm she clasped the youngest of her children, who appeared to my terrified imagination to be dying, as its head reposed on her bosom, while her tears fell slowly on the little pallid face; the girl, unconscious of her mother's anguish, sat upon the pillow behind her, playing with some flowers, and the eldest boy had seated himself by her in his

own little chair, and was holding her left hand and looking mournfully at her, and his brother. Fixed to the spot by grief and amazement, I dared hardly breathe lest I should too suddenly alarm her. Her eyes were shut, and I only saw by the tears that fell from them, that she was not in a state of insensibility, for my entrance did not seem to disturb her—she supposed it to be the maid.

In a moment, however, the little boy turned round and saw me, and screaming my name in an accent of transport, as he eagerly ran towards me. Geraldine opened her eyes, and repeated, “Desmond! gracious heaven! Desmond!”

As soon as I could disengage myself from the caresses of the child I approached—“I am destined” said I in faltering accents, “I am destined to disturb and alarm you, can you forgive me for this intrusion?”—I hesitated—I hardly knew what I would say. She gave me however her hand as she rose; involuntarily I could have pressed

pressed it, for the first time in my life, to my trembling lips, but I dared not; and I remained holding it still in mine, while she said, after a pause of a moment—"Never was the sight of a friend more truly welcome."

The cordiality of this reception, (for her eyes, heavy as they were, confirmed the purport of her words) restored me to some degree of confidence and composure. I took a chair, unbidden; she begged I would forgive her for attending to her child, who was, she apprehended, dangerously ill.—I enquired how long it had been so, and she replied—

"I am grown so very weak, Mr. Desmond, I mean, that I am so much disposed to be what the fine ladies call nervous, that I am no longer fit for a nurse; every foolish accident discomposes me, and of course injures my nursling—I have been extremely alarmed for the life of this ill-starred baby, within these few hours, but I hope my fears have exaggerated the danger."

ger." I had no need to ask what it was that had so much distressed her, yet I did not like abruptly to tell her, that I was already acquainted with it; she did not however, lead to it, and we remained for some moments silent, while little George clung about me, and said he loved me dearly for coming back.

"Ask Mr. Desmond, my love," said Geraldine, as if glad to have the means of thus questioning me.—"Ask him, why he came back when we were afraid he was quite gone."

"It was," answered I, "to prevent your being alarmed by the suddenness of a visit from another person, which will, even when you are prepared for it, be, I believe, disagreeable enough." She grew more pale at these words—"you mean the Duke de Romagnecourt?" "I answered, yes; and relating briefly what had passed, except that part of our conversation that raised my suspicions about her husband's having literally sold her, (with which it was impossible for me to overwhelm her)

I asked what she would do to evade the importunities of a man, who seemed to suppose his wishes were not to be counter-acted, and to believe he need only appear, to obtain them."

The dignity of conscious worth, thus deserted by its protector, gave spirit for a moment to her languid countenance. "If Mr. Verney," said she—but she checked herself, and hesitating a moment, said, with less vivacity—"if this nobleman gives himself the trouble to come hither, which, however, I most earnestly wish he may not, my answer will be very positive, and very short—I am extremely obliged to you for giving me notice of his intentions; but if you could prevent his coming—"

It did not, at that moment, appear to her that *my* interference was liable to a thousand misconstructions — but before she had finished the sentence, this occurred to her very forcibly; and she added—"but I beg your pardon for my inconsiderate folly—this cannot be—he must come—I must undergo, unfit as I am, the
irksome

irksome ceremony of seeing him, and of giving him my positive refusal."

"And if he should afterwards persist?"

"Impossible—he surely cannot intend it."

I then gave her a specimen of his conversation, which I had, till now, mentioned only in general terms.—She was much affected at the idea, that the strange and unmanly conduct of Verney had exposed her to a scene so improper, and so extraordinary—And I saw her turn her eyes, expressive of the most acute maternal anguish, and filled with tears, on her children, particularly on the little one in her arms; but even in this moment she uttered no complaint against their cruel father, though I saw her bosom heave as bitter reflections on his conduct, swelled her heart almost to bursting.

Oh! Bethel! why could I not, at that moment, have taken this lovely, injured woman and her children openly under my protection?—Why could I not avow that ardent, yet sacred passion I feel for her?—Alas! instead of daring to own it, and to

offer her my life, I was struggling, perhaps inefficaciously struggling, to make all I said, all I proposed, appear as the dictates of mere friendship ; and to persuade her, that, from a mere friend, she might, nay, ought to accept my counsel, if she could not my offers of service.—After a farther conference of half an hour, during which, I said all that might, without too much alarming her, put her upon her guard against the Duc de Romagnecourt's projects—I was preparing to take my leave, when she asked me if I had breakfasted—I never once recollected that I had not—She ordered breakfast to be brought ; and, I saw, made an effort to be chearful, but it was evidently forced ; her eyes anxiously followed the child, as the maid carried it out of the room—I remarked, that notwithstanding the particular conversation in which we were engaged during breakfast, she listened to every noise above stairs, and went out twice to enquire after it.—It was proper I should go—for, I knew, I must be an inconvenient interruption to her ; yet
I had

I had not said all I wished to say, and could not determine to depart.

On her return the last time into the room, she smiled on me with angelic sweetness, and asked if I forgave her abrupt rudeness?—She then sat down again—endeavored once more to regain her composure; and enquired at what time I thought it probable she might be oppressed by the honor that threatened her?—As she thus again introduced the subject, I collected resolution enough to tell her that my fears of her sufferings did not end with this visit—for that I thought the noble foreigner very likely to persevere in his entreaties, and leave nothing unattempted to enforce them.—At the word *enforce*, on which I laid a strong emphasis, she smiled, and asked me if I thought he would really enact a French Sir Hargrave Pollexfen, and carry her to Paris without her own consent?—I answered very gravely, that though that could hardly be done; yet, that she might, and I was afraid, would find the Duke a visitor of great perseverance,

verance, and one who would not, without great difficulty, be dissuaded to recede from a point which, he thought, he had her husband's authority to persist in.

She looked at me, as if to examine whether I meant more than I said—I suppose I looked as if I did—But again she endeavored to laugh off the fears which she would willingly believe groundless.—“ I cannot imagine,” said she, “ why you have taken it into your head, that this man would give himself so much trouble—I dare say he will make a fine speech or two, be *au dressepoir*, that he cannot have the happiness of my company, and content himself with shrugging up his shoulders at my want of common sense, in preferring this *pays triste & morne*, with my children, to the delights of a journey to Paris with him.”

“ I wish,” replied I, “ it *may* end so, my dear Madam.”

“ But you doubt it ?”

“ I do, indeed.”—I then gave her some stronger reasons, drawn from my observations of the preceding evening, *why* I doubted.

doubted it—"You are," said I, "quite unprotected here; you have not even a man-servant who might shut your doors against impertinent intrusion."—She allowed this; and when I asked her whether I had her permission to remain at the cottage, I had before inhabited, till I saw the event of this visit, a faint blush, which spoke a thousand grateful, yet fearful sensations, was visible on her cheek—But checking her fear, her pure and noble mind yielded only to gratitude, she gave me once more her lovely hand—"It is worthy of you," said she, with enchanting frankness, "to make so generous an offer, I accept it rather to quiet your apprehensions than my own; but it must be upon condition, that you run no risk of embroiling yourself with this extraordinary visitor of mine."—I assured her I would not; and having obtained permission to wait on her for half an hour in the evening, I took my leave.

And now, my dear friend, I have written this volume since—I have seen from

my windows the carriage of Romagne-court go to her house—Impatiently I awaited its return, which was not for an hour and a half; and now I go to enquire the result; and as I shall send this immense packet away to-day, and shall have no opportunity to write again for some time, I leave you to comment on the strange story I have related, and to blame, for so I doubt not but you will, (since chivalry is no more) this romantic knight-errantry

Of your faithful,

LIONEL DESMOND.

You see I conclude cheerfully, which I account for by telling you, that whenever I am to see Geraldine, I feel in heaven; and I hope to see her this evening restored to quiet, for her child was better when I left her; (indeed, I believe her tenderness greatly exaggerated his danger) and I hope the noble Duke has departed peaceably with his final answer; yet, till I am assured that she is completely relieved from his insolent importunities, my heart, I find, must be subject to frequent fits of anxieties and indignation.

